

PROMOTING SUCCESS AT SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF A NURTURE GROUP INTERVENTION

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ABSTRACT

This case study was based on a programme that followed the Nurture Group concept in a Secondary School in New Zealand. The Success at School (SAS) programme was based within the school complex and consisted of a home classroom where students were provided with both an academic and social/ life skills programme. The nine selected students were all failing academically and socially within the Year 9 cohort.

Academically, all students made some small gains in their literacy and numeracy skills and also on task behaviour. Socially, small gains were made by most students in their positive interactions with others and in decreasing their absences, suspensions, referrals from class and lateness to school. Eight of the nine students indicated an attachment/ trust relationship with their teacher and/ or teacher aide. However it is not clear if the small gains that were made by most of the students can be directly attributed to the Nurture Group concept. The small group size, 1:1 teaching, individualised learning programmes and the introduction of a social skills programme may also have contributed to the small academic and social gains the students made. This case study provides an insight into the adaptation of a United Kingdom (UK) primary school Nurture Group model to a New Zealand secondary school setting.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Historically there have always been a proportion of students who fail at school. The reasons for failure are diverse and according to the literature include, for example; low social economic status, lack of security in the home, restricted knowledge of good parenting practice, drug dependency, early pregnancy, lack of funding and good resources in the classroom, and poor teaching methods and practices (Bowlby, 1992; DfES, 2001; O’Conner & Colwell, 2002). Rendall and Stuart (2005) suggest that some of these factors have been determined by the children’s genetic, social and developmental histories. These factors are complex, difficult to fathom and often a result of a combination of aspects. The resulting child may exhibit underdeveloped social skills and poor relationships which may further impede their development. These can have a devastating effect on academic performance and future life chances for the child (Walker, Ramsey & Gresham, 2004).

There are a number of environments where troublesome behaviour can develop. Church (2003) identified three separate contexts in which anti-social behaviour can develop; the home environment with parents and siblings, the school setting with teachers and other students and the playground or other meeting grounds for peers and other associates. In comparison, Church further suggests students raised in a stable home, where good manners and polite behaviour are encouraged, are more likely to continue these positive interactions in alternative settings.

There have been several explanations for why students fail at school. Many students at school appear to be in a perpetuating cycle. For example, the child could be bored by the subject material or by the presentation of a lesson in school and become off task. S/he may then choose not to attend subsequent periods and so fall behind with the workload. The work in future may be too advanced and beyond the students’ reach; s/he does not want to be

exposed as falling behind and therefore misbehaves. The teacher must respond to this behaviour while educating an entire class. The consequences which may result could include time out or ultimately exclusion from school which only further disrupts the student's educational attainment and does not offer hope for the individual. Rendall and Stuart (2005) identified these students as the ones who need an education to break the cycle of hopelessness.

Teachers in the current context have increasing knowledge of the problems which are associated with poor development and have access to solutions to improve the child's self concept and attainment at school. Teachers have an obligation to identify and teach to the needs of our individual students (Nind, Sheehy & Simmons 2003). Enfield (as cited in Rendall & Stuart, 2005) proposes teachers should aim to reduce the unhappiness resulting from failure to enable children to develop into confident and secure individuals, who can reach their educational potential and contribute to society and are able to become successful parents in the future.

Many solutions to remedying student failure at school have been offered. For example; more support and help for families in the home, greater professional development for teachers and more input from the community and support agencies (Rendall & Stuart, 2005). One intervention which has been tried in the United Kingdom has been 'Nurture Groups'. The Nurture Group concept seeks to enable the child who has had disrupted development to attach to a significant adult, to develop social skills and form relationships resulting from the care and empathy that the adult shows (Wearmouth, Richmond, Glynn, & Berryman). Boxall (2002) claims that a stable and safe environment with a low teacher to student ratio can have a significant positive influence on students who are failing at school due to 'attachment disorders'.

It has been proposed that a lack of attachment to a responsible adult caregiver at an early age prevents a child from developing emotional security (Bowlby, 1992; Cooper & Lovey, 1999; Rolfe, 2004). Bowlby proposed that children have an innate need for attachment to a significant parent or care-giver. Children who are deprived of maternal care may be seriously affected in their physical, intellectual, emotional and social development and have difficulties with their language development. As they grow older they may also have difficulty forming stable relationships. If relationships are formed they tend to be superficially friendly or promiscuous (see Holmes, 1993).

A Nurture Group has historically been a class of twelve students who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and have been causing disruption to mainstream primary school classes. The class is staffed by a teacher and trained classroom assistant, or teacher aide who models effective behaviour and social skills. The first Nurture Group began in 1970 and was implemented by Marjorie Boxall, an educational psychologist in London. Boxall (2002) argues that the Nurture Group offers a safe environment with clear routines and limits, where broad based experiences are offered, which are carefully planned and learning opportunities are recurring.

In New Zealand in 2006 one primary school in Auckland had introduced the Nurture Group concept. However, there are several critical differences between the United Kingdom (UK) and New Zealand model. Firstly, the cultural mix and diversity in New Zealand differs greatly from the UK. Secondly, the school curriculum differs between each of the countries and teaching practices can vary. Therefore it will be important to ascertain if the current Nurture Group concept would work in a New Zealand educational setting.

Mental health

Mental health issues in young people are a growing concern in New Zealand and overseas (DfES, 2001; Denny, S., Clark, T., Flemming, T., Wall, L, 2003; Williams,

McCreanor, & Barnes, 2003). Ten percent of children who are aged between 5 -15 years in the United Kingdom have been found to have some form of mental health problems (DfES, 2001). New Zealand statistics are inconclusive, however, the Youth Health Survey reports the incidence of serious mental health disorders as significantly lower than that of the UK and that 4.2% of males and 2.9% of female students were diagnosed as having severe behaviour problems (Youth Health Survey, 2003).

The DfES (2001) suggest good mental health is the ability to maintain a level of personal functioning and social engagement, to have positive self esteem and the ability to interact with peers and adults and to cope with the demands of maturity. They further propose that a mentally healthy child can empathise, knows right from wrong and can resolve problems, while learning from them. The DfES (2001) outlined a number of different problems that children with mental health problems may experience; emotional disorders, such as phobias and depression; conduct disorders, such as anti-social behaviour and stealing and; attachment disorders such as markedly distressed or socially impaired behaviour. It is only when these problems are persistent or severe that children are labelled as having a mental health disorder.

Within schools in the UK, children experiencing mental health problems which are externalised are generally defined as encountering emotional and behavioural difficulties. Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) is a term used within an educational framework, to describe a variety of difficulties a child may experience in their childhood. These are a result of adverse experiences, such as troubled family relationships or ineffective behaviour management (DfES, 2001).

In New Zealand at the present time, the Mental Health Commission, as well as the government department, Child Youth and Family, acknowledge that the health sectors that

support services in New Zealand are insufficient to manage the care of young people who have mental health disorders (Wells & Smith, 2000).

Emotional and Behaviour Disorder / Difficulties (EBD)

Since the 1960s there has been comprehensive classification and diagnosis of mental disorders by the Mental Health Programme of the World Health Organisation (ICD-10 1992). This classification includes a group of disorders described as behavioural and emotional disorders, which usually onset during childhood or adolescence. It includes conduct disorders, which often present as severe problem behaviour in schools. These behaviours are characterised by a regular pattern of antisocial or aggressive conduct which is persistent and repetitive, such as harassment, violence, stealing, truancy, non-compliance, brutality and fire starting (Church, 2003; Dwivedi, 2004). Dwivedi (2004) suggests 5.3 per cent of children have conduct disorder and found these problems to be common and persistent, hard to manage and treat, costly for the society financially and denote poor prospects. Church (1996) estimates between 4.5 and 5 per cent of children exhibit anti-social behaviour in his study in Canterbury primary schools. He also suggests that students with behavioural learning problems are often some years below their expected developmental and social level. Children, and more frequently boys, may be operating as 8 years old, although the child may be 13 years old in real terms (Church, 2003).

Dwivedi (2004) found that behavioural disorders are the result of a range of factors. These include: social factors; for example, mixing with peers who are deviant, drug use and addiction, being in care: family factors; for example, a history of criminality, domestic violence, physical punishment and abuse, lack of parental supervision, inconsistent consequences for instances of poor behaviour, lack of reinforcement for good behaviour, family discord, attachment problems: school factors; for example, lack of resources, inconsistent discipline systems and processes, poor academic attainment and results and:

individual factors; for example, naturally difficult personality or temperament, separation from parents at early age, Attention Deficit Disorder, lack of social skills and learning difficulties.

Cullinan (2004) outlines four main ideas which explain how children with EBD become antisocial. They suggest that this disability then leads to school failure, which results in a negative self image leading ultimately to expulsion from school. Research has shown that those students who have EBD are five times as likely to drop out from school than other students (Quinn & Poirier, 2004). They further suggest that apart from behaviour problems and underachievement that are prevalent in students with EBD, they are also more likely to be physically aggressive, be rejected by peers and receive fewer positive interactions with teachers.

Department for Education and Skills (2001) suggest that children who have emotional and behavioural problems also have learning difficulties. These learning difficulties are considerably greater than for the majority of children of the same age. Campion (1992) suggests that there is greater risk of educational failure for these children and they seem destined to attend special schools, such as those available in the UK. Contrary to this point of view, Conner's (1994) perception is that specialist provision will only contribute to the child's difficulties with their real needs being overlooked. Wearmouth, Richmond, Glynn and Berryman (2004) identified that although schools have an agenda that is overcrowded, emotions can override the whole process of teaching and learning. The impact on the behaviour of teachers and students can be immense as a safe emotional environment helps to enhance learning. Identifying the importance of emotional regulation in teachers and students has to be at the core of whatever schools are trying to achieve (Sazberger-Wiienberg, 1964, as cited in Walker, Ramsey & Gresham 2004).

Emotional competence has a significant influence over the acquisition of learning development. Dwivedi (2004) proposes that learning is unable to take place in the absence of safety and acceptance of the teacher or adult. Furthermore, in order to be able to be involved in autonomous learning, people need to feel secure in their attachment to significant adults and this attachment dependency can be viewed as a prerequisite for independence. Maslow's model suggests our emotional needs are arranged in a hierarchy and sees self-esteem as essential if emotional stability is to develop (Maslow, 1970). It follows that schools would need to address the emotional and behavioural issues by providing training before expecting learning to take place (Dwivedi, 2004).

The students who have EBD are likely to also be among the sub-groups most at risk from failing at school. The factors which contribute towards school and later life failure, such as unemployment, homelessness and criminality are complex, but the quality of schooling is a contributing feature (Quinn & Poirier, 2004). They propose that most children with EBD perform at a level below average in the majority of academic subjects. They further advocate that learning disabilities may compound underachievement and suggests schools can and should do more to diminish the problem behaviours that result. Without intervention children with EBD are likely to suffer from severe mental health problems, drug abuse, delinquency, truancy and result in further criminal behaviour as an adult (Robins & Ratcliffe, 1978-1979, as cited in Quinn & Poirier, 2004).

The financial impact on society is immense for children with EBD. It is estimated that an individual bound for a life involved in drug misuse and crime will cost society approximately US\$2,000,000 per year (Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, 2002). Further implications of lack of intervention include marital problems, irregular employment, an increased risk for multiple arrests, drug abuse, and becoming institutionalised for either mental health disorders or criminal behaviour (Quinn & Poirier,

2004; Walker, Ramsey & Gresham, 2004). They further suggest that this cycle of anti-social behaviour is likely to be ongoing within family units. Moreover, they propose that grandparents who had been involved in crime had considerably more offspring also displaying behaviour that was of an antisocial nature, than grandparents who were not delinquent.

Children with conduct disorders have also been found to have other mental health and social problems at a later stage in life such as, schizophrenia, hyperactivity, obsessional disorders and depression (Quinn & Poirier, 2004; Walker, Ramsey & Gresham, 2004). Anti-social adults, who have not benefited from any form of intervention, are also more likely to use physical forms of punishment on their children. They are likely to have low self esteem, hurt the people who are close to them and increasingly rely upon alcohol and drugs to fill the gaps in their lives (Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992, as cited in Quinn & Poirier, 2004).

Chazan, Laing and Davies (1994) distinguish between emotional and behavioural difficulties that are externalised and those that are internalised. The suggestion is that those who openly demonstrate their feelings by being disobedient, aggressive or destructive are labelled as antisocial in school and are often referred to as having a 'conduct disorder'. These are externalising behaviour difficulties. Others, who do not present issues such as defiance or disruption either at home or at school, yet may be withdrawn, anxious, timid, depressed or markedly unhappy, are students who internalise their emotional problems. Chazan, Laing and Davies (1994) reported that even at as young an age of eight years old, significantly more boys (17%) demonstrate antisocial behaviour compared to girls (5%). They also suggest that girls may present more internalising problems associated with emotional and behavioural disorders than boys.

During the course of normal development children begin to take responsibility for their own behaviour. They learn self control and the ability to self-regulate, which assists

with the emotional development of concepts such as empathy, shame, guilt and conscience. This emotional regulation provides competence to prevent them from responding to antisocial impulses (Dwivedi 2004). It has been suggested that people go through several different stages before they are able to differentiate or understand another's perspective or are capable of having 'theory of mind' (Happe, 1994).

A further dimension of emotional maturation is associated with our increasing ability to tolerate and control our emotions. Parents allow children to experience the feeling of emotions, but intervene when necessary, in order to protect the child from being overwhelmed. In this way the young child is protected from negative experiences and learns strategies which detract and comfort. Initially children's emotions are expressed through large body responses. However, with maturation, children develop cognitively and learn motor control so they are able to use a variety of symbolic gestures (e.g. showing affection, anger, separation, loss) and words. Caregivers influence such development and help the child acquire both verbal and non-verbal communication skills so they are able to identify and express their needs and feelings. The ability to regulate and control emotions is dependant on the quality of training. When a child becomes stressed they need to be comforted by an attachment figure. If the stress is too intense or the attachment figures are not available or rejecting, then the resulting behaviour can be confused, appearing even aggressive (Dwivedi, 2004). However, hostile and violent behaviours may also be a façade for the desire to make connections and receive physical contact with another person (Mawson, 1987).

An important role of a parent is one of safety and protection. Toddlers should be allowed to explore and learn from experiences that do not harm the child physically or mentally. Without the necessary parental control children are prone to neglect. That is, they could engage in behaviours that are risky and could lead them to be hurt. If the parent fails to protect the child from emotions that are overpowering, Dwivedi (2004) suggests that a

condition of psychic trauma may develop. The child learns the helplessness of the situation such as being abandoned, abused, hurt, tortured or rejected and the disorganisation that is associated with it. The panic and dread which results may be offset by anger, rituals, violence or a mentally disassociated state such as becoming a fly on a wall. Outbursts of violence in later life are often attributed to traumatic experiences in the past of the individual who have learnt that the only way to communicate the hurt is through action, be it aggression and violence (Dwivedi, 2004).

Intervention is important for a variety of reasons. It has been suggested that money spent on mental health programmes and services is certainly well spent with many indirect savings in the health and education sector, the judicial system as well as in social welfare. The long term benefits are numerous and include a better quality of life for the child and family, prevention of poverty, fewer adult crimes, and a reduction in illnesses and self-induced injuries (Knapp, 2001, as cited in Quinn & Poirier, 2004; Walker, Ramsey & Gresham, 2004).

Programmes which aim to increase the level of emotional competence in students can improve educational establishments by increasing the student's educational achievement, health and well being. They also prevent classroom bullying, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and AIDS and promote positive teacher-pupil relationships, self-confidence and self-esteem (World Health Organisation, 1992).

The mental health of children is a global concern, with far reaching consequences. Initiatives are imperative to prevent alienation from school, antisocial, harassment and aggressive behaviours, depression, self harm, eating disorder, anxiety disorder, teenage pregnancy and the effect of bereavement, separation and parental mental disorder, amongst others (Dwivedi, 2004).

Risk and resiliency

Some children are more at risk of developing mental health difficulties than others. Contributory factors can be: loss or separation of a significant other, such as through parental break up, death or loss of friendship; through events deemed traumatic, such as physical or mental abuse, war or accidents; or life changes, such as moving school (DfES, 2001).

Some children exposed to an array of difficulties appear to be resilient and develop into emotionally competent and competent individuals. Resilience incorporates several elements that interconnect. These include having a personal sense of self-esteem and being confident, believing in one's own self-efficacy, able to handle and adapt to change and having a repertoire of problem solving approaches to social issues (Rutter, 1985, as cited in DfEE, 2001). These resilient factors can serve as a counterbalance to off-set the impact of risk.

McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter and McWhirter (2004) identified five core competencies that differentiated risk between children. These include critical school competencies, concept of self and self-esteem, connectedness, coping ability and control. Students who have an abundance of these 'C's' are likely to be successful, while those who are deficient in these skills are likely to be at risk, for example, of school failure. The DfES (2001) also propose a number of risk and resiliency factors that differentiate children at risk (See Table 1). According to the DfES (2001), an increased number of risk factors escalate the chances of developing a mental health problem. With one risk factor there is 1-2% chance of a mental health issue developing; with three factors present, there is an 8% chance, increasing to 20% with four or more risk factors involved.

*Table 1**Risk and resiliency factors in children, adapted from DfES (2001)*

Risk factors in the child	Resilience factors in the child
Specific Learning Difficulties	Secure early relationships
Communication difficulties	Being female
Specific developmental delay	Higher intelligence
Genetic influence	Easy temperament when an infant
Difficult temperament	Positive attitude, problem-solving approach
Physical illness especially if chronic and/or neurological	Good communication skills
Academic failure	Planner, belief in control
Low self-esteem	Humour
	Religious faith
	Capacity to reflect
Risk factors in the family	Resilience factors in the family
Overt parental conflict	At least one good parent-child relationship
Family breakdown	Affection
Inconsistent or unclear discipline	Clear, firm and consistent discipline
Hostile or rejecting relationships	Support for education
Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs	Supportive long-term relationship/ absence of severe discord
Physical, sexual or emotional abuse	
Parental psychiatric illness	
Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder	
Death and loss – including loss of friendship	
Risk factors in the community	Resilience factors in the community
Socio-economic disadvantage	Wider supportive network
Homelessness	Good housing
Disaster	High standard of living
Discrimination	High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying
Other significant life events	Schools with strong academic and non-academic opportunities
	Range of positive sport/ leisure activities

Attachment theory

Wearmouth et al (2004) describe Bowlby's theory of attachment as being the social, emotional and behavioural characteristics which result from a person being in close proximity to their caregivers. Bowlby's theory derived from the realisation that our early experiences have a direct impact on how we later engage with the world. In his view our early attachments with our parents or care-givers dictate our emotional and social growth. In positive situations attachment causes a higher level of curiosity, an increase in risk-taking and a determination in learning. An individual is more able to deal with failure and persists to perfect tasks. In negative situations, through insecure attachment, phobias and self-doubt may result. Attachment is a concept which is represented developmentally in the mind of each individual.

Attachment takes time to occur. Rolfe (2004) emphasizes that the mere presence of an attachment figure will not necessarily allow attachment to occur, but it is the relationship and bond that develops between the caregiver and child, through meeting the child's needs. According to Rolfe (2004), Bowlby's beliefs about separation experiences came mainly through studying attachment breakdown as a result of the death or removal of a parent through hospitalisation or by them being institutionalised. This was when there was no stable caregiver continually available to respond to the child's needs with sensitivity. She views these experiences as fundamentally different from the short and routine separations many children are exposed to through childcare. Insecure attachment may also result between the parent, who is abusive and neglectful, and the child. Insecure or avoidant attachment results from responses from the parent that is erratic or inconsistent. Early studies of attachment focused predominately on the mother and her sensitivity during the first three years of the child's life. However, later studies focussed on the significance of a father figure in the concept of attachment formation.

Attachment figures vary. An attachment figure can be anyone whom the child expects to receive care and protection from harm (Rolfe, 2004). Howes's study (1995, as cited in Rolfe, 2004), suggests that attachment figures provide physical and emotional care, they are consistent care givers in the child's life, and they have an emotional investment in their child. This definition implies that a teacher could meet these demands.

Attachment theory is one way to explain the emotional development of individuals throughout their life course. There are several view points on attachment theory. Bailham and Harper (2004), suggest that if attachment does not occur during the first three years, possible mental health concerns such as separation anxiety, school phobias, aggression and addictions in children and adolescence could occur in the future. Rolfe (2004) suggests attachment disorder and attachment insecurity can be differentiated in terms of their severity. Some mild forms may not cause too many problems within the child. Whereas more severe forms of attachment disorder could lead to insecurity, aggression, internalising disorders and anxiety. Bailam and Harper (2004) suggest that the purpose of attachment theory is to give a framework for preventative and treatment programmes for children over a range of developmental ages. The focus for early programmes is on minimising stress in caregivers and seeks to address factors such as parental psychopathology that may compromise the parenting ability, while developing parenting skills that assist them to be more consistent and responsive. Attachment interventions for those with older children focus on the environment and providing a place that fosters the emotional and interpersonal factors associated with secure attachment.

Disorders of attachment are categorised by the world health organisation (ICD-10 1992), but they clearly state that there is no single diagnostic classification which can cover all of the various types and severity of attachment disorders of attachment (Bailham & Harper, 2004). Classification appears complex as symptoms are wide-ranging. For example,

some children with attachment disorder are known to have difficulty socialising with peers, whereas others may be over-familiar with strangers.

To help reconcile the many different classifications, Rolfe (2004) created a distinction between four attachment types: Firstly, the securely attached have a 'normal' development pattern. Secondly, the 'avoidant' would see the parent as unavailable and try to cope alone. These people may appear independent and emotionally autonomous. Thirdly, the 'resistant' where there may be inconsistency or lack of parental control, feelings of resentment or anger and chaos and finally the 'disorganised or disoriented', where children are scared due to maltreatment or child abuse. She proposed that children who have disorganised or disorientated attachment are susceptible to other externalising problems, such as conduct disorders or attention deficit disorders. These externalising behaviours, as noted earlier, can have an impact on successful social functioning later in life.

Bailham and Harper (2004) draw our attention to the importance of the development of empathy through attachments developed at an early age. Those children who are securely attached are more concerned with the needs and feelings of others than with satisfying their own needs. They describe adolescence as a critical stage where self-reliance is developed through negotiation between adolescent and caregiver. Without secure attachment, young people are unable to develop trusting relationships and become insecure in themselves. Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt and Target (1994, as cited in Dwivedi and Harper, 2004), conducted longitudinal research into attachment disorders in adolescents. Their findings suggest a connection between secure attachment and the ability to control one's ego, frustration and emotions.

Our attachment needs are ongoing and span a lifetime. Bowlby (1973) observed that people of all ages perform better, increase in confidence and are at their happiest when they have a trusted adult or trusted person to support and help them should difficulties arise. A

child who is self assured by the safety net of a significant adult is more able to express themselves emotionally, develop a curious and active mind and independently cope with arousal. Rolfe (2004) proposed that it is never too late to change our behaviour or methods of parenting. Family-counselling or other interventions directed towards adults can help those with attachment concerns to become more sensitive. Howes and Segal (1993, as cited in Rolfe, 2004) found that half of the children in their study who had attachment problems formed secure attachments after two months of being placed with alternative foster carers. Nippert (2005) suggests that it is possible for behaviours to be permanently changed in adulthood, which implies that it is not too late to effect change in students at school.

Early intervention of attachment disorders is recommended. Osofsky and Eberhart-Wright (1992, as cited in Rolfe, 2004) found that children who were given sensitive care at an early age were more likely to be resilient. Therefore, it would seem advisory for any intervention to begin at the earliest possible opportunity. Students who are academic, it would seem, have more chance of overcoming difficulties stemming from attachment disorders than do non-academic students (Rolfe, 2004). Masten (2001, as cited in Rolfe, 2004) suggests the key to being resilient is through making connections with role-models in the family or community, who are competent and caring. Individuals who view themselves positively and believe they will have an impact on society are also likely to be resilient. Factors that can help to protect individuals with attachments issues can be by offering support and building new relationships that are positive and offering hope through the provision of new opportunities within the students' lives. Teachers of early childhood education can promote resilience through having relationships with children that are secure and by providing positive emotional and social experiences. They can also provide support for caregivers (Rolfe, 2004).

Although reliance on others never ends, Bowlby's view (1969) is that children of three years old are able to be less reliant on their attachment figure and cope independently with the help of others. By the age of four or five years society expects children to be fairly socially competent. Attachment theory suggests children who have histories that are secure will be more emotionally independent, have more self-esteem, and be socially more empathic during interactions (Rolfe, 2004). She also proposes that beginning primary school is one of the most vital transitions in terms of cognitive-related demands. A child who is securely attached is advantaged in his or her approach to learning, while those insecurely attached will be disadvantaged. For these securely attached children, tasks are approached with more inquisitiveness and optimism, it is more likely that help is sought and there is more persistence, especially when difficulties are faced.

Secure attachment appears to improve friendships. Colin's study of Human Attachment (1996, as cited in Rolfe, 2004), proposes that peer interactions are greater and more satisfying when children are securely attached than when they are not attached. However, it is more difficult to determine how and if experiences of early attachment can affect development at a later stage of life and to ascertain the extent of this influence. One issue which supports this uncertainty is that many symptoms of mental illness do not show until adolescence or beyond. It cannot be assumed that behavioural problems are a direct result of an insecure attachment history. In contrast, Thompson (1999, as cited in Rolfe, 2004) concluded that while there is much research still to be done, attachment theory appears a sound basis in this regard.

Children learn behaviour from adults. Children who are subjected to rejection or care giving that is inconsistent use strategies developed within their cognitive learning framework through observing patterns of behaviour and attention from adults, assessing the impact of these and transferring them to memory. Adults should seek to model effective behaviour and

use discussion techniques rather than dictatorship style interaction methods. The more we can give young people opportunities to meet with and observe directly how sensitive and caring parents treat their offspring, the more likely they are to follow (Rolfe, 2004).

There is some evidence to suggest attachment theory may be a misnomer. Critics of attachment theory propose that it is a hypothetical concept and the evidence for its existence is inconclusive. Rutter (1995) contests Bowlby's findings, proposing that we cannot be sure that early interactions dictate the characteristics of individuals.

There appears to be no sound evidence as to what is the best intervention for attachment disorders. Rutter and O'Conner (1999, cited in Rolfe, 2004) raise a number of concerns, including whether the focus should be on past or present parent-child relationships or both. Their perception is that there are constraints towards understanding treatment and also uncertainty as to what is needed for the children when their attachment problems are rooted in the past.

There is also some debate in differentiating between attachment disorders and antisocial behaviour (Walker, Ramsey & Gresham, 2004). Antisocial behaviour can be defined as the repeated violation of social norms over a range of contexts, such as home, school, and the community (Simcha-Fagan, Langer, Gersten, & Eisenberg, 1975, cited in Walker, Ramsey & Gresham, 2004). Walker et al (2004) defines antisocial behaviour as aggression towards others, deliberate rule breaking and defiance against authority. It is "hostile to the well-being of society and aversive to others" (p. 4). Students with attachment disorders often present as antisocial. However, we can not conclude that all antisocial students have attachment disorders.

School role

Schools have a crucial role to play by focussing on the development of emotional competence in their students. Schools can also help alleviate problems associated with these

issues by using specific emotional development initiatives and by training staff (Mental Health Foundation, 1999). Dwivedi (2004) found programmes aimed at improving emotional development in students were often absent from schools and policies for managing emotional development were either thought to be unnecessary or purely for those children with difficulties. The consensus is that initiatives must be school wide and be cemented within the culture of the school. These could be through specific health curriculum delivery or take a cross-curricular approach. For any intervention to be viable it is important for students, teachers and schools to develop ownership of it. Dwivedi (2004) proposes that schools have the ability to influence the behaviour of parents by offering programmes that improve parenting skills. Another solution is professional development for staff which could focus on cooperative learning or improving student / teacher relationships. He argues that the ideal would be to bring emotional competence to the forefront of the agenda for the school and community. The Life Skills education programme is one such initiative which offers a framework in which active and experiential learning can take place (Dwivedi, 2004). It is imperative that staff are good role models and are able to successfully control their own behaviour and emotions. There will also need to be systems in place to support staff and students in this process, such as by offering training and guidance programmes in supporting students with EBD. Another school programme that has been used to support students with EBD is the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS). This programme is designed to increase the ability of children to recognise their own emotions and be able to communicate these effectively to people around them (Greenberg, Kutsche, Cook, & Quamma, 1995).

Improving the quality and quantity of 'group work' which operates in schools can also impact on positive outcomes for all students. Group work can help young people learn how to be more giving, conquer egotistical feelings and rage, develop creativity and inspire a

sense of interdependence. It must be remembered that students in need of extra assistance may not readily co-operate and take part in the group work programmes designed to assist them. Much effort must be made to ensure the young people understand the purpose and process of group therapy approaches, to enable participants to value the programme, taking ownership of it and becoming personally involved, to alleviate problems associated with stigmatisation (Franklin, 1998).

Many teachers believe students' behaviour in the classroom is crucial to the learning ability of the students. Good student behaviour also increases the teacher's own personal esteem. Although the teacher is recognised as being a major factor, the child's home and social background have a part to play in determining student behaviour. It is important to consider the key influences of family and community, while encouraging good communication between home, child and school, which is non-judgmental and allows time for reflection and consolidation (Wearmouth, Richmond, Glynn, & Berryman, 2004).

Nurture Groups

Nurture groups were first developed in the UK in the 1970's. Interest in nurture groups within the UK has continued to grow and develop (Cooper & Lovey, 1999; Doyle, 2001; O'Conner & Colwell, 2002). A Nurture Group classroom is within a school setting, designed to be welcoming and homely, with facilities for sharing food as well as educational activities. It "is an early intervention resource for children whose social, emotional and behavioural needs are unable to be met in a mainstream classroom... a bridge [for] children who, for a wide variety of reasons, are without the basic essential early learning experiences that enable them to function socially and emotionally at an age-appropriate level" (Doyle, 2004, p.24).

The assumption underlying the Nurture Group concept is that children who have not had emotional stability or suitable learning experiences throughout their early years need to

be able to develop these skills before they are able to learn in a conventional school environment. It is only then that maturity will prevail (Wearmouth et al 2004).

The Nurture Group classroom differs from a conventional classroom. It is essential that the Nurture Group classroom is both welcoming and comfortable, with kitchen facilities for preparing food, most notably breakfast, which is an essential element of the programme, particularly in the initial stages of development. This allows food to be shared with the group who may previously have omitted breakfast from their routine and also allows good table manners and relationships to develop. Provision should be made for a computer and a 'home room' area, which should be carpeted with comfortable furniture. Expectations are clear, enabling students to develop trust and security. The principle objective at this stage is engagement; the teacher must grasp the attention of the students and take them forward. Nurture groups "provide a restorative experience of early nurture, normally integral to the home but increasingly needed in school as the first stage of the learning/educational process... the essential precursor of foundation stage educational provision" (Boxall, 2002, p.12).

Boxall (2002) suggests that issues associated with children suitable for nurture group provision escalate over time. It is better when they are referred as early as possible, preferably as new entrants in the primary school; otherwise it is likely that a pattern of resistance to school and increasing failure in the classroom will set in. Nurture groups are based on core family values and are underpinned by attachment theory. The development of secure relationships is worked upon, so that students are able to become attached to a significant other (Cooper & Lovey, 1999). The result for the child is dependent on recreating the composition and substance of the child's earliest years. This process, according to Boxall (2002) requires the teacher and teacher aide to intuitively respond to the students needs, just as a parent would.

The nurture group concept consists of the following features. The referral process begins with staff members expressing concern about individual students, which are then observed by teachers in mainstream classes. The classroom teacher then completes the Boxall profile (see Bennathan & Boxall, 1998). This is an assessment based on the child's emotional and behavioural needs. If the Boxall profile indicates attachment / emotional / behavioural concerns then the parents are invited to the school to discuss the child being placed in the Nurture Group. The level of parental involvement in the Nurture programmes varies considerably, but is encouraged. Students are then integrated into the nurture group, with a time frame of between one and four terms. At the end of the time frame the student is then reintegrated back into their mainstream classes.

Nurture groups are fully integrated into the child's ordinary school. Nurture Group classrooms are ideally situated at the heart of the school. The children can then make reasonable relationships in wider social circles and become confident to move beyond their comfort zone because they feel protected by the support networks that encompass them (Boxall, 2002).

Children selected for the nurture group present a range of emotional and behavioural factors. The general features that nurture group children exhibit include: they don't engage with peers or adults appropriately; they are unable to handle social situations and are not resourced with basic competencies; they are lacking in their functioning or are distressed in more obvious ways (Boxall, 2002).

Many children in primary school nurture groups are deficient in their mental health development and need to learn to take ownership of their behaviour and develop self control. Often the incidents which provoke behavioural outbursts are trivial. The Nurture Group provides structure and routines which can help alleviate these problems and help to settle the children. Distraction is also used as a tool to use to avoid problems escalating. Children are

encouraged to discuss issues and feelings associated with them, rather than displaying physical aggression. They are given time to reflect on situations so they become able to internalise the teacher's expectations (Boxall, 2002).

Boxall identified that early mornings, particularly on Monday's, can be problematic, with confrontations occurring more frequently. She proposed a shared breakfast as a way to help stabilise the group and alleviate difficulties. If fighting occurs, the students are encouraged to ignore the disturbance and continue with their work. The student is not blamed nor is the teacher overly critical of the behaviour. Boxall (2002) suggests a mirror can help individuals to differentiate anger from calm by comparing expressions of the teacher with that of the student. The teacher accepts that these outbursts of anger are a necessary step in the process towards progress. Discussion, to work out what has happened may be between the teacher and student, but often involves the whole group, with the teacher assisting the child to speak and allowing all group members input. The student must learn to accept and move forward after this process. The intention of the Nurture Group is to guide the students' interests and enthusiasm into developmentally appropriate activities that are relationship focussed and become intrinsically satisfying. Using this philosophy, Boxall (2002) proposed in most cases the students' behaviour begins to improve substantially.

The curriculum within a nurture group is varied, but incorporates the key competencies of reading, writing and mathematics. These are introduced at a level appropriate to each individual and are usually given at a slower than normal pace. Repetition may be necessary so that students can master tasks that may be unfamiliar, but also so they can experience the satisfaction of success. Baking is an activity that the students may find difficult but is used as a rich learning opportunity and is of great value to the students as a life skill. It also develops maths and science concepts and language development. The end result of something good to eat can also enthuse the student and motivate them extrinsically.

Nurture Groups belong to the school; therefore students within the nurture group are exposed to the protocols of the school, such as assemblies. The 'last-in, first-out' concept has been found to provide the smoothest platform for students in the nurture group to attend formal whole school gatherings. Break time and lunch time can be difficult occasions for the nurture group students, so provision is made for these students to find familiarity and safety when they feel vulnerable at these times, such as staying in the Nurture Group classroom.

Teacher / student relationships are also different to that of the mainstream teacher. Teachers of a nurture group should be willing to discuss their own personal life and develop an interest and enthusiasm for the students' lives. This interest allows for the development of language skills and a personal relationship / attachment to be formed. Positive relationships are critical to the success of the nurture group programme and this positive interaction must be modelled by the teacher and teacher aide, in their daily interactions with students.

Bennathan and Boxall (2005) state that we can not be sure of the best provision for individuals. The complex nature of emotional and behavioural disorders makes referral complex and uncertain. The group composition is a determining factor in the success or failure of the programme. Boxall (2002) argued that there should be a maximum of two-thirds of students that are disruptive or aggressive. The balance of the group needs attention, with care taken admitting a gender imbalance and if numbers drop below 10, the group dynamics can be flawed. Boxall (2002) suggests that the nurture group programme can offer something for most students, in a variety of ways. The environment is organized with support and protection, with limits clearly defined. In this way attachments can be made, through trusting relationships. The learning experiences are broadly based, giving them relevance to those with a range of difficulties. Boxall (2002) does, however, suggest that the short term nature of a nurture group may not be sufficient to instil a permanent change in

some individuals and that it may be too ‘general’ for those who require a more intensive programme.

The role of Nurture Groups in terms of students emotional and behavioural difficulties has been described by Cooper and Lovey (1999). They surveyed 35 delegates at a national meeting for practitioners involved in Nurture Groups for their perceptions of the impact of Nurture Group provision in their mainstream infant schools. The range of professionals included head teachers, teachers and educational psychologists and their views were predominantly positive. They reported that the Nurture Groups were educationally focused, flexible and accessible as they enable children to experience early nurture, while increasing their self-esteem. Children were supported to learn and to develop an enthusiasm for learning. The school as a whole became more optimistic, with constructive attitudes replacing negativism. The limitations of this survey were that the researchers’ relied solely on the Nurture Group practitioners’ opinions and did not undertake any observations of the Nurture Group working.

Cultural differences

Every child raised within a particular family or environment will develop different values and thinking based on the cultural context they have been immersed in. “Meaning-making is situated in a cultural context as well as in prior conceptions that learners bring with them into new situations as a result of previous learning in other contexts” (Wearmouth et al, 2004, p.3).

The majority of research is undertaken within a western world view or framework. Therefore, there is a possibility that judgements made may be value-laden and not suit another person’s perspective. We must be ready to accept alternative perceptions when considering the attachment process in a cultural context (Rolf, 2004). Goldberg’s (2000) cross-cultural research found that patterns of attachment were similar amongst different

cultures, but there were differences in the type of security and insecurity that relate to cultural interpretations and expectations of desirable behaviour and child care. Furthermore, although most cultures appear to see secure attachment as worthwhile, the reasons for this value differ between cultures.

Within New Zealand, Bishop and Glynn (2004) have noted a difference in the way Māori and Pakeha New Zealanders view and respond to the education process. They suggest that values such as individual competition, individual achievement, and self discipline are very different from the Maori perspective and detract from the spirituality of their culture. For Māori, the educational norm had been mainly through verbal teachings, passed down through generations within the community context and was often abstract and deeply rooted in religion and spirituality, whereas for Pakeha, the written form is the norm.

MacFarlane (2000) states that New Zealand educators have shown limited understanding and knowledge of the culture of Maori. As a consequence, the perspectives of Māori knowledge of teaching and learning principles have been suppressed. MacFarlane's view is that the whānau or extended family continues to have an important role to play in Māori society. He suggests interventions for students with emotional / behaviour or attachment problems must incorporate the values and principles of the whānau and the whānau should be invited to support the behaviour and learning of their children within schools.

Māori culture sees helping students who are experiencing behavioural or learning problems as a teaching and learning issue in which the whole school and community is responsible for addressing. MacFarlane's (2000) Hikairo Rationale is a behaviour model which guides participants to peaceful resolutions. Within this framework it is essential that good, strong relationships are built between the teacher and students based on fairness, with time allocated to sharing personal experiences so teachers can connect with the lives of the

students. This is a constructive method of finding a solution to behavioural concerns which requires teachers to distinguish the emotions in others so they are able to respond to the desires of others (MacFarlane, 2000). The ethos is that to gain strength and achievement group input is necessary:

Ehara tōku toa I te toa takatahi
Engari kō tōku I te toa takitini

My strength comes not from myself alone
But from the strength of all the people

Summary

Problematic behaviour can be viewed through many different lenses. This includes attachment, emotional, behaviour, or mental health difficulties. Any intervention proposed will be dependent on the interpretation implied. However, the basic needs of social acceptance in which students are valued and respected are essential.

The Nurture Group concept is one way in which educators have tried to address some students' emotional and behavioural concerns. While this group is based on a UK model, it is yet to be seen if this concept can be transferable to the New Zealand environment.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

There is evidence to suggest that nurture groups are successful and that they are cost effective, especially when compared with the special school model (Iszatt & Wasilewska, 1997; O'Conner, 2002). They have been cited as good practice by the DfES (DfES, 2001). Iszatt and Wasilewska (1997) report that up to 87% of students who have had nurture group support have been successfully reintegrated into mainstream classrooms. Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) found that having a nurture group within a school had a positive impact which was school wide.

There are various nurture group models currently in operation in the UK, including at least one where students attend fulltime and at least two in secondary school settings (Cooper, Arnold, & Boyd, 2001). There appears to be no documented evidence for the success of these tailored programmes at the current time. Current research proposes that nurture groups work well for primary pupils, at age 5-6 years and 7-8 years (Boxall, 2002), but the relevance for secondary students is as yet unknown.

The aim of the literature review was to examine the effectiveness of Nurture Group interventions and to determine how assessments had been used within different Nurture Group studies.

The research examined in this study was selected from electronic searches made of ERIC (Education Resource Information Center) and a PAM search consisting of Professional Development Collection, Academic Search Elite and MasterFILE Premier Databases. The descriptor terms which were used to search were "nurture groups". This accessed 32 reports from ERIC and 41 from PAM. The reference lists from the relevant studies were used to assist in obtaining further relevant studies. Google search and Google Scholar search were also used to search for 'Boxall' and 'Doyle', to ascertain if websites were available on

Nurture Groups. Finally, issues from several journals, published post 1998, were searched manually to locate any further relevant studies. These journals were the British Journal of Special Education, the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, the British Journal of Educational Studies, the Times Educational Supplement and the British Journal of Developmental Psychology.

Studies which were most relevant were those which examined nurture groups in the UK and behaviour interventions in the UK. Studies were included using the following criteria as a guide: Nurture Groups, nurturing practices or emotional and behavioural interventions in children were examined. Case studies and descriptive data were predominantly used. Four studies were found to meet these criteria. Summaries of these reports are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Nurture Group and associated studies relevant to the Success at School (SAS) programme

Reference	Title	Design	Participants	Research Procedures	Measures	Main Findings
Colwell J. O'Conner T. 2003	Understanding nurturing practices: a comparison of the use of strategies likely to enhance self-esteem in nurture groups and normal classrooms.	Descriptive.	Comparison of teacher communications in both normal and nurture group classrooms. Nurture Group and Year 1 classroom in 4 schools in UK (5-7 Years).	Non participant observer.	Verbal statements by the teacher assigned to one of the observational categories which were then matched to self-esteem framework. Reliability 82.9%.	Teachers in the Nurture Group used more positive ways to communicate, both verbally and non-verbally with students. 86% of the statements made by nurture group teachers reflect behaviour that may enhance self-esteem compared to 50.7% of statements in normal classrooms.
Cooper P. Arnold R. Boyd E. 2001	The effectiveness of Nurture Groups: Preliminary research findings.	Descriptive Interim report over 2 years.	342 pupils of whom 216 were in nurture groups and 64 were matched with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties in mainstream and 62 matched without SEBD (Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties). 84% 4-7 yrs old 16% 7-10 yrs old UK National.	Interviews with teachers and pupils, academic progress data.	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman 1997), Boxall profile data (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998).	Nurture groups appear to have added value to the work that schools do with children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. 55% of parents report improvement. Children reported improved perception in their school work. And school staff positive reports.

Cooper P. Tiknaz Y. 2005	Progress and Challenge in Nurture Groups: evidence from three case studies.	Descriptive. 3 case studies, 3 schools, 2 infant and 1 primary.	9 nurture group staff, 9 mainstream teachers, 3 head teachers in the Midlands, UK 3 yrs, currently ongoing.	Semi-structured interviews & non-participant unstructured observations.	Goodman Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman 1997), Boxall profiles (Bennathan, 2003).	There was a need for communication between nurture group staff. Improvement noted in students emotional, social and behavioural development but few gains in academic achievement.
O' Conner T. Colwell J. 2002	The effectiveness and rationale of the 'nurture group' approach to helping children with emotional and behavioural difficulties remain within mainstream education.	Descriptive.	68 children who had attended nurture group full time. Mean age 5.25 years London borough of Enfield, UK.	Measure size & statistical significance at completion of nurture group intervention, to discover if these were maintained 2 years later.	Developmental diagnostic profile scores are compared for a sample of pupils on entry to a nurture group, on exit and at least 2 weeks after.	Short term effects of nurture group provision are exhibited. Long term effects less clear. Whole school approach to nurturing needed. Nurture Group class remained in mainstream setting. Nurture Group teachers communicated more positively with students.

Effectiveness of Nurture Groups

Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001), in an interim report from a longitudinal study over two years, looked at the effects of Nurture Group provision on personal, social and educational attainment. The participants were 342 students of whom 216 were in nurture groups, 64 were matched to a control group with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) in mainstream and 62 were matched to a control group without SEBD. 84% were 4-7 years and 16% were 7-10 years old. Using the Social Development Quotient (Goodman, 1997; Goodman, 1999) and Boxall questionnaires (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998), mean scores for both of these profiles improved consistently for Nurture Group students during this period. The views of school staff reflected a highly positive perception of the nurture group (96%). Fifty-five percent of parents reported improvement in their child's progress and children appeared to have an improved perception of the quality of their schooling. This was an interim report, where the positive outcomes were expected to improve on conclusion of the study. However, the researchers noted that judgments can not be made until completion of the project.

O'Conner and Colwell's (2002) research focussed on the effectiveness of Nurture Groups as an inclusive approach to prevent students with emotional and behavioural problems from being permanently excluded from school. This project looked at the short and longer term (2 years after reintegration) effects of Nurture Groups on the Diagnostic Profile Scores of students who received Nurture Group provision, to ascertain if improvements had been maintained. The participants were 68 children who had attended a nurture group full time in London. The children's mean age was 5.25 years. The findings show that most children who received Nurture Group provision remained in the mainstream and therefore benefited in the longer term effects of attending the Nurture Group (O'Conner & Colwell, 2002). The findings suggest that teachers in the nurture group used more positive ways to

communicate, both verbally and non-verbally with students. Eighty-six percent of the statements made by nurture group teachers reflect behaviour that may enhance self-esteem compared to 50.7% of statements in normal classrooms. Limitations of the study relate to the subjective nature of the reporting of scores for the individual profiles which are used in this study. The authors concluded that interpreter bias may exist and also rater variability may be responsible for differences in the scores obtained, as various people took results at different stages in the study. There was no control group.

Colwell and O'Conner (2003) sought to find reasons why early Nurture Group intervention was effective in increasing students' self esteem. The researchers compared the teacher communications in both mainstream and Nurture Group classrooms, in Year 1 of four primary schools in the UK. This observational study compared mainstream teacher practices with Nurture Group teacher practices and concluded that communication within Nurture Groups was more positive. The results showed that Nurture group teachers used statements that reflected items that included self esteem components appropriately 29% more than mainstream teachers (86% - 51%). The authors concluded that positive communication; both verbal and non-verbal had a direct impact on increasing the self-esteem of more students within the Nurture Group classrooms than students in the mainstream classes. The authors highlight a number of limitations for this study, including using only one researcher to conduct the observations, raising questions about its reliability. Also, direct measures of self esteem were not obtained; therefore there is no certainty that self esteem was affected.

Three case studies provided results for Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) which found there were 'opportunity costs' and 'opportunity gains' resulting from offering Nurture Group provision in schools. Their focus was three schools: two infant and one primary school (ages 5-9 years) in a low socio-economic region in a city in the UK. Their research draws on the unpublished research by Cooper and Whitebread (see Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005) which

identified features that differ between Nurture Group programmes that influence their effectiveness and could alter students' progress. These factors are outlined below in Table 3.

Table 3

Factors that influence the effectiveness of Nurture Group provision in three schools in the UK as summarised by Cooper and Tiknaz (2005)

School-related factors	Class composition and structural issues	Child-related factors	Organisational factors
The replacement of the head teacher during the running of Nurture Group	The distribution of age within a Nurture Group	Relative quality of children's National Curriculum attainment levels	Length of time that the Nurture Group has been in existence
The replacement of Nurture Group staff during the running of Nurture Groups	Balance between male and female children	Nurture Group pupils' levels of fluency in English	Proportion of the school week spent in the Nurture Group by pupils
The quality of teaching in the school as a whole	Balance in terms of different types of Social Emotional and Behavioural difficulties (SEBD) represented in the Nurture Groups		

Key people, such as Nurture Group staff, mainstream staff, principals and Nurture Group students were interviewed, for their views relating to issues such as progress, reasons for success of Nurture Groups, difficulties and challenges reported on. Forty hours of unstructured non-participant observation also informed the results of this study. The quantitative data was derived from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) and Boxall profiles (2002). This study found benefits of Nurture Group provision that related to all students within the school, not solely those in the Nurture Group. The authors report that most improvements were made in the students' emotional, social and behavioural development, with fewer gains being made in academic areas. There is no clear data to substantiate this claim; most evidence is qualitative, based on opinion. The amount of each

gain is unclear. The need for good communication between Nurture Group and mainstream staff was highlighted as a concern, particularly during reintegration stages (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). This was the only study found which explored the effectiveness of Nurture Groups, using a range of techniques. It reported on various positive and negative factors regarding Nurture Groups, including academic achievement, although a limitation of this study was that the results for these findings were not presented in this article, and much evidence appears to be anecdotal. There was also no control group.

The aim of this present project was to describe what happened to a group of 11 students by the end of their attendance in a secondary school 'Success at School' Programme. The 'Success at School' programme was based on the UK Nurture Group concept and adapted to New Zealand conditions.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Settings

School

The setting for this project was a secondary school in New Zealand that had approximately 950 students in 2006. The ethnic breakdown was 70% European, 18% Maori, 10% Samoan and 2% Other. In Year 9, the 238 students were slightly biased towards being males, having 54% male and 46% female students. The school employed 76 teachers, 77 support staff and 28 teacher aides. The school had a decile rating of 2, which corresponds to an area populated by low social economic groups.

Success at School Programme

The Success at School programme was developed in 2005, when it was identified by school staff that they had a problem with an unusually difficult cohort of students. School records, in the form of data analysis indicated that of the intake of 250 Year 9 students, 120 had significant behavioural issues. By week six in term 1, three Year 9 students had been excluded, four other students were suspended and there were diversion meetings for a further nine students. Overall, 37 students from Year 9 had been stood down. In terms of learning needs, 74% of the Year 9 students were found to be below average according to midYIS (Middle Years Information System) overall score data. The midYIS was a test designed to measure aptitude for learning and ability that has been found to predict subsequent achievement. The senior management team at the school decided to be proactive in its response to this scenario and approached the Ministry of Education (MoE) for support. Through the MoE, the school was advised by two members of Group Special Education (GSE). After consultation, a proposal was initiated to develop a 'Nurture Group' classroom,

to cater for the individual needs of some of the students who were encountering difficulties at school. The model was adapted from the ones used in the UK.

The SAS classroom

The classroom, part of a temporary outside block, was separated from the main school building. It was modified using many features identified by Boxall's Nurture Group model (Boxall, 2002). The modifications included a built-in kitchen with facilities for food storage, preparation and cooking; a sofa or soft area for quiet space which incorporated a range of games and hands-on activities; individual learning stations; four computers; group work tables and an office attached. There was a mirror which was deemed important, according to Boxall (2002) for students to see themselves in different emotional states, such as when they were angry, frustrated or contented.

Cooking room

Once per week, the group used the school's on-site food technology classroom for cooking lessons for just over an hour throughout terms two and three. This class was facilitated by an off site provider. The food technology classroom was situated in the main school building, two minutes walk from the SAS classroom.

Outdoor Education

A local Trust with experienced youth leaders provided adventure based learning and outdoor activities on two afternoons per week throughout terms two and three. For ease of management, the group was usually split into two groups of five and six students. Some examples from the programme included short walks and cycle rides in the hills, problem solving activities, indoor climbing and ten-pin bowling.

Opportunity room

The opportunity room was a temporary classroom, close to the SAS classroom which was used by a range of students from the whole school who had difficulties in their regular classes. Examples of when students could use the opportunity room could be when disruption in the home environment was influencing concentration in class, or there were problems with relationships in class, which required a 'cooling off period', amongst others. It was staffed full time by a teacher aide, particularly chosen for her empathy and understanding for students who were encountering difficulties in their personal lives. The room also contained a kitchen area, a sofa and three computers. Students from the SAS programme could be sent here by the SAS teaching staff for a period of 'time-out' where appropriate.

Referral room

The referral room was also a temporary classroom near to the SAS classroom, used for school wide discipline purposes. For example, students not adhering to school rules in class were sent here where incidents were then recorded and managed. Examples of classroom behaviour leading to referral were disruption, refusal to work, physical violence and verbal abuse.

Participants

Staff

There were a variety of staff involved in the SAS programme including school counsellors, the school principal, the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO), educational psychologists and members of the team from GSE. The teacher for the SAS programme was specifically employed for this task. The school advertised for a teacher with specific skills, that included, for example, a commitment to the principles of attachment theory and an ability to re-engage youth who have experienced failure in the classroom back

into the learning process, amongst others. The SAS teacher had numerous tasks, such as organising meetings with parents and guidance counsellors, academic testing of students at various stages of the programme, as well as being directly responsible for the teaching and learning of all the students within the SAS programme. A teacher aide was appointed with the help of the recently appointed teacher, with skills to complement the teacher, which included youth and broad life experience and knowledge of diverse and cultural needs. The teacher aide gave learning support to the students and helped with guidance and management tasks if the SAS teacher was otherwise engaged. The staff who had the most direct impact on the teaching and learning of the SAS students and were most involved in the SAS project are outlined Table 4.

Table 4

Staff profile

Responsibility	Main teacher of SAS class	Teacher aide of SAS class	Outdoor Education instructor, 2 afternoons per week. Trust manager	Cooking teacher 1 hour a week for 10 weeks
Age / gender	41 / female	39 / male	41 / male	39 / male
Ethnicity	White European	Maori	Maori / Pakeha	Chilean South American
Qualifications	B.Ed. Primary Diploma Information Technology. Diploma Education Management. Diploma Teaching	No formal qualifications. On the job training, life experience and sports coaching expertise.	Outdoor Education. Business Management. Landscaping. Building. Celebrant.	Chef, Polytechnic Institute of Technology.
Employment history	9 years primary teacher New Zealand. 1 year teaching in UK. 3 years primary senior teacher. 5 years Deputy Principal, primary.	3 years, Steel business owner and manager. Trouble shooter in steel industry. 3 years building technician. Machine operator in plastics industry. 6 months working with intellectually handicapped.	NZ Army. Forestry worker. Tannery worker. Builder. Landscaper. Youth worker. Supervisor. Church leader.	18 months manager / coordinator at a youth café. 4 years at a health camp. 18 years as a chef.

Student selection process for SAS programme

The students were selected for a variety of reasons. Some of the criteria included disruptive behaviour within the classroom, inability to make and sustain friendships, a poor academic record and an unstable family background. Various selection techniques were employed, with the initial selection made by the term one mainstream class teachers on a form distributed by the SAS teacher. Using this information, in conjunction with school records and direct observation in class, the SAS teacher was able to create a short list of suitable candidates for the SAS class. The short list was refined to ensure a balance of gender and in terms of different types of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Initial indication of areas of development where extra assistance for each child might be needed was taken from the guidelines for nurture group provision in the UK (see Boxall, 2002). Table 5 indicates the check list that the SAS teacher used to help inform her decision making for student selection.

Table 5

Initial checklist to assist with student selection, adapted from Boxall (2002)

		No problems evident	To some extent	Considerable	Barely functions
1	Self-regard	Secure and confident	Needs reassurance	Very uncertain or negative attitudes	No evidence
2	Relationships with adults	Trusting			
3	Response to experiences (including play)	Self-supporting and self-directing	Needs adult help/support	Can't / doesn't use opportunities	Little response
4	Basic self-control	Self-monitoring	Responds to imposed constraints / support	Poor; needs firm control or is beyond control	Can't tolerate interference
5	Social relationships	Normal consideration for others	Complies with imposed standards; some negative features	Little concern for others, or negative to others	Not involved
6	Verbal communication	Adequate communication	Limited / inadequate communication	Rarely makes verbal contact	Urgent requests only
7	Formal learning	Adequate competence	Engages with support	Does not engage adequately	Needs total support
8	Specific educational needs (medical/physical)	None evident	To some extent	Considerable	No evidence
9	Emotional / behavioural difficulties	None evident	To some extent	Striking	Seems traumatised
10	English as a second language	Adequate competence	Moderate	Marked	Doesn't speak

Students

Participants within this case study were nine of the 11 students within the current SAS programme; four males and five females. One student did not provide informed consent and one care-giver also elected to abstain from providing consent. The students were all aged between 13 years and 15 years 3 months at the time of entry to the SAS programme. All the students selected attended the programme on a full time basis within normal school hours. If successful within the programme the students would then be reintegrated into the mainstream classroom. Those students would initially attend one or two mainstream classes and return to the SAS classroom for other periods. The number of classes that the student attended increased over time and was dependant on the student's ability to adapt to the new timetable. The aim was that all students would be fully reintegrated to mainstream by Term 2, 2007. A new group of year 9 students would then be selected to begin a placement in the SAS class. Table 6 provides a profile of the nine selected students for this project.

Table 6

Participants profile

Student Number	Sex	Year Group	Age at entry	Health / Behaviour – past & present	Referral reason	Culture / ethnicity	Home / Social / Agencies involved
1	Male	9	14 yrs 6mths	Low oral language skills	Poor behaviour. Low oral lang. skills	NZ European / Pakeha	Lived with mother. CYFs intervention, Family Mental Health
2	Male	9	13 yrs 4 mths	ADHD, ritalin physical / verbal abuser	Poor behaviour	NZ European / Pakeha	Lived with mother. Family Mental Health, Respite Care, Anger Management Group
3	Female	9	13 yrs 1 mth	Slightly deaf in one ear, history of manipulative behaviour	Poor behaviour, underachiever, peer issues	Maori	Lived with mother. CYFs intervention
4	Female	9	13 yrs 2 mths	Erlens eye disorder, ADHD, Ritalin, immature, wanderer	Attachment, poor academic ability	NZ European / Pakeha	Lived with cousin. CYFs intervention, psychotherapist, Intensive Case Management Team
5	Male	9	13 yrs 9 mths	Aspergers, Dyspraxia. psoriasis	Disabilities, poor academic ability	NZ European / Pakeha / Tongan	Lived with mother and father. Had been bullied, social issues. CYFs intervention, Family Mental Health, Respite Care
6	Female	9	13 yrs 9 mths	Attention seeker, Disruptive family circumstances, selective bullying	Behaviour, peer issues	NZ European / Pakeha	Lived with both parents. Financial hardship. CYFs intervention, GSE, Intensive Case Management Team
7	Female	9	13 yrs 10 mths	History of manipulative behaviour	Behaviour Truancy	NZ European / Pakeha	Lived with grandparents. CYFs intervention.
8	Female	9	13 yrs 2 mths	Erlens eye disorder, ADHD, Ritalin, immature, wanderer	Attachment, poor academic achievement	NZ European / Pakeha	Lived with cousin. CYFs intervention.
9	Male	9	14 0 mths	History of violence	Poor academic achievement and behaviour, attachment	Maori	Lives with mother and father. GSE (Group Special Education)

CYFs = Child, Youth and Family assistance

Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the school principal and the Ethical Standards Committee at the former Christchurch College of Education. Informed consent from the school principal, student participants, their teachers and the care givers of the students involved was provided before data gathering commenced. Confidentiality and anonymity of subjects and the programme has been protected by using pseudonyms for all participants and the setting.

Procedures

Research design

This research project used a mixed method methodology; that is, it used both qualitative and quantitative sources of data collection. Mixed-method researchers consider the research question to be more important than the method used or the worldview underpinning that method. The method is determined by ‘what works’ and the research is deemed to have important social consequences (Mertens, 2005).

In order to effectively describe the SAS Programme, the research design followed a case study approach. A case study is a comprehensive study of a single setting, subject or a selected event (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Burns, 1997). Case studies “seek to understand the larger phenomenon through close examination of a specific case and therefore focuses on the particular... are descriptive, holistic, heuristic, and inductive... complex and multilayered...” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.104).

It has been proposed for a case study, that an array of data gathering techniques be employed and that data should be gathered over time. The nature of case studies is contextual which means that results cannot be generalised, although some findings may be applicable elsewhere in similar circumstances (Merriam, 1998).

Data collection

A range of data was collected so that a broad picture could be viewed of the programme. The study began when the programme was started in the fourth week of term 2, and continued for the next 19 weeks of school in term time. Processes of discipline, classroom behaviour and academic performance were deemed important indicators of the success of the SAS programme. As a result, data gathering techniques were selected using the following criteria:

- Relevance to the aims of the programme (See appendix i)
- Opportunity for a change over time comparison
- Data could be gathered on every student within the programme
- Assessments that were reliable and accurate

The following data met these criteria and included:

Student records

Each of the student records were reviewed at the start, middle and end of the project. Records of student performance and data from terms 1 - 4 at secondary school were gathered. Where possible data was also gathered from the students' previous intermediate school.

The following student records were viewed and analysed for each of the participants.

- Percentage absence from school.
- Number of days and number of times students were suspended or stood down from school.
- Number of times referred to the referral room.
- Number of times late to class.

The results were tallied each half term and averages generated for these time periods. The exception was in term 2, where the averages were calculated for the first three weeks before the programme commenced and the last seven weeks after the programme had began.

Assessments

A range of assessments were used. Assessments were important as they gauged if learning and behaviour improved as a direct result of the SAS intervention programme.

School administered assessments.

The participants undertook a variety of academic tests. These were undertaken by a variety of mainstream teachers and teacher aides at different times throughout the project. Some of these assessments were inappropriate for the purposes of this study because they did not fit the criteria outlined in the data collection section. Others were used to develop further understanding of the merits of the programme. These assessments included:

- NUMPA (numeracy)
- LASS (literacy)
- PROBE running record (literacy)
- BURT word recognition (literacy)
- Peters spelling (literacy)
- AstLe (literacy)

A student's Diagnostic Development Profile was developed for each participant using the Boxall Profile at the beginning of the programme by the SAS teacher (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998). The student's level of adaptive functioning was measured through the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997). This questionnaire was administered by the SAS teacher at the beginning of the programme. The SAS teacher completed a Reintegration Readiness Scale (Doyle, 2001) at the beginning of the programme, during the programme and immediately prior to reintegration to the mainstream.

Self-devised assessments

Independent academic assessments were also conducted by the author on each student, at the beginning (week 2), middle (week 10) and end of the project (week 19). The purpose of these assessments was to ascertain how much, if any academic progress was being made during the programme. These assessments included:

- Academic Numeracy – Backward Number counting
- Academic Numeracy – mathematics frequency
- Academic Literacy – Decoding fluency
- Academic Literacy – Writing fluency

The teacher aide also completed a Social Development Scale (Church, Tyler-Merrick, & Hayward, 2006) for each pupil at the beginning (week 6), middle (week 13) and towards the end of the project (week 19).

Interviews

Students were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format at the beginning, middle and end of the project. The same questions were asked on each occasion, so a direct comparison could be made across the three occasions. The main purpose of the interviews was to ascertain the student's views on a range of questions. The students' responses were then compared to see if the students' felt they had made any progress over the period of study. Using the model adapted from McWhirter et al (2004) questions were asked which allowed identification of such individual characteristics as: self-efficacy, concept of self and self-esteem, connectedness, perspective taking, empathy, thinking of alternate solutions and understanding consequences, knowing right from wrong and optimism. Questions 1-6 related to attachment with questions 7-14 relating to emotional well-being (see appendix ii).

Direct observations

Each participant was directly observed on a weekly basis, from week 5 through to week 19. Each week the students were randomly selected by alternating the order each time. Each student was observed for 15 minutes at a time, following an interval recording format. Two student observations took place one after each other, with 10 seconds for observing, followed by five seconds for recording. The purpose of these observations was to gauge the social functioning of each student at any given time throughout the programme. Judgements could then be made concerning students cooperation, following instructions, observing boundaries and routines as well as behaving in a socially appropriate manner. The results from these observations assisted with judgements concerning the progress students were making in their social development.

Reliability

Inter-observer reliability was undertaken by a research assistant, who conducted 41% of the total number of the direct observations (n=307). The research assistant was a secondary school teacher and also a post graduate student who had previous experiences undertaking direct observations in the classroom context. Two hours of training were provided to the reliability observer, where the observation categories and procedure were explained in detail. Using a training video (Clark, Jennings, & Langley, 1990), practice time was then provided so the research assistant could apply the category definitions to the behaviour observed. Comparison was made to the results of the author. One 15 minute practice observation was then made in the classroom.

Table 7

Reliability measures for Direct Observations in weeks 8 – 16

Observation Categories	Percentage Agreement in Term 3									
	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11*	Week 12	Week 13	Week 14	Week 15	Week 16	Total
% On Task	94	98	95		96	98	99	99	99	97
No. of Requests	98	96	80		73	100	100	100	100	93
% Compliance	69	54	43		73	100	100	100	100	80
% Positive Social	74.2	87.5	83		89	94	93	99	98	90
Total No. of Negative Interactions	96	100	96		84	92	94	100	100	95

* No reliability checks made

Table 7 represents the percentage of reliability over the course of the project. The % On Task and Number of Requests were well within the 85-95% expected for sound reliability. Results were lower than expected for the % of compliance and % of positive social behaviour during weeks 8, 9 and 10. However, during week 11, additional training took place through discussion and practice and from week 12, a high percentage of agreement was reached.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The results of the Success in School programme in a New Zealand secondary schools indicate that this programme was successful for most of the students in decreasing their absences, suspensions, referrals from class and lateness's to school. Small academic gains were made for seven of the nine students. The findings also indicate that six of the nine students increased their positive social skills and on-task behaviour over the period of study. The mean rate of negative interactions and the mean percentage compliance decreased for all students as the study progressed.

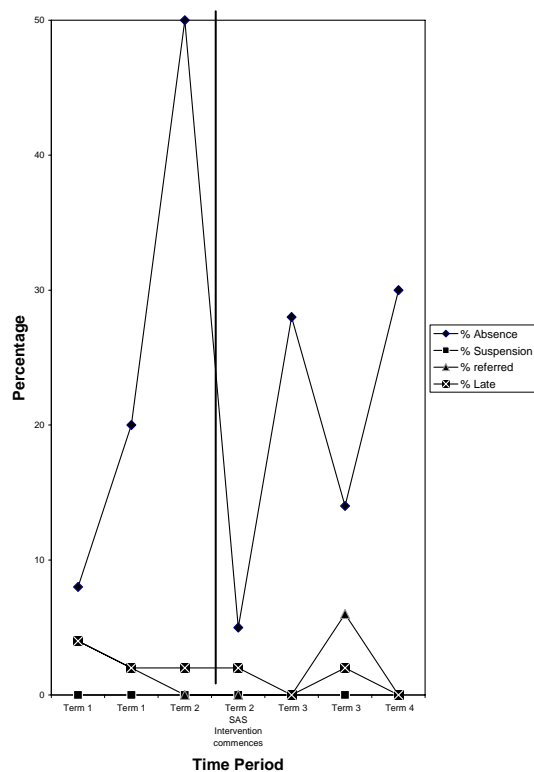


Figure 1: Percentage of absence, suspension, referral and lateness for student 1 prior to and following entry to the SAS programme

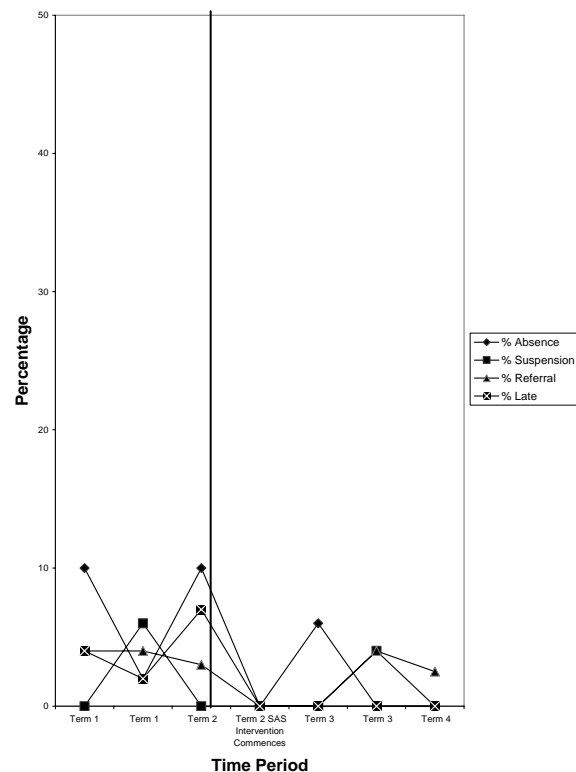


Figure 2: Percentage of absence, suspension, referral and lateness for student 2 prior to and following entry to the SAS programme

Figure 1 indicates the percentage of absence and suspensions from school, referrals and lateness to class for student 1 over the period of study. Pre SAS programme, student 1

recorded a mean absence of 26% (range = 8-50%), whereas post SAS programme, absences decreased to mean of 14% (range = 5-30%). Student 1 was not suspended from school either pre or post SAS programme. Student 1 showed a steady decline in the number of times he was referred before he was integrated into the SAS programme. This is inversely related to his high % of absence at this time. Lateness to class decreased from a mean of 3% (range 2-4%), to only 1% (range = 0-2%) post SAS programme.

Figure 2 indicates the percentage of absences and suspensions from school, percentage of times referred and late to class for student 2 over the period of study. Student 2 was absent 7.3% pre SAS programme commencing and this reduced to 1.2% post SAS. Student 2 was suspended in term 1 and then again in term 4 at levels of 6% and 4% respectively. Student 2 recorded a mean of 4% for referral to the referral room pre SAS, which decreased to zero % when the SAS programme began, producing a mean percentage referral of 2% post SAS. His mean lateness to class was 4% prior to beginning the SAS programme. This decreased to zero % for the rest of the study.

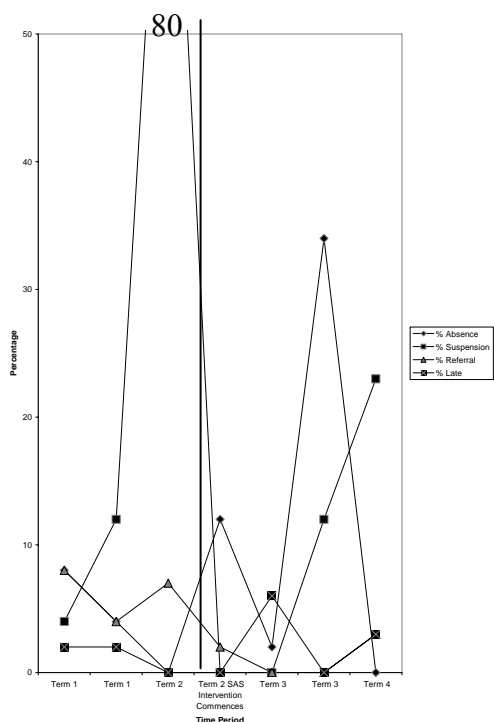


Figure 3: Percentage of absence, suspension, referral and lateness for student 3 prior to and following entry to the SAS programme

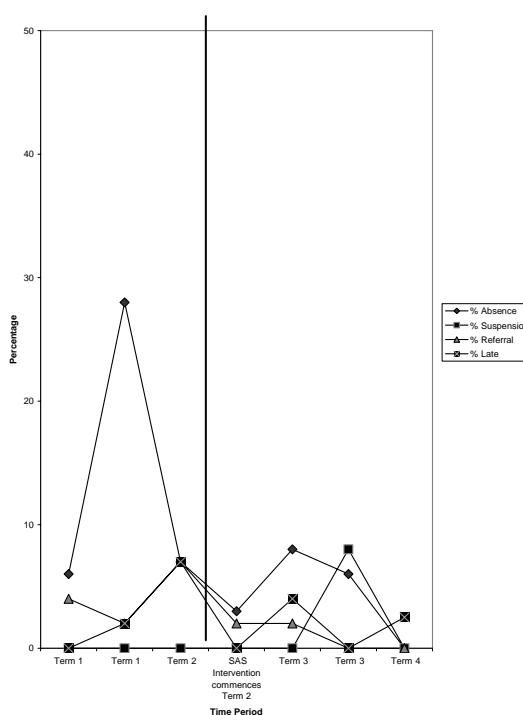


Figure 4: Percentage of absence, suspension, referral and lateness for student 4 prior to and following entry to the SAS programme

Figure 3 indicates the percentage of absence and suspensions, percentage times referred from class and late to class over the period of study. Pre SAS student 3 recorded a mean absence of 4%, which increased to 12% post SAS programme. Student 3 was suspended in Term 1 and then again in Term 2 and not able to return to school until the SAS programme began, hence the percentage of suspension reaching 80% pre SAS programme. Student 3's percentage suspension reduced to zero at the beginning of the SAS programme and then steadily increased to reach 22.5%, when reintegration started at the beginning of Term 3. Student 3 recorded a mean percentage lateness of 1% pre SAS programme, increasing to 2% post SAS programme.

Figure 4 indicates the percentage number of absences and suspensions from school, percentage referral from class and late to class for student 4 over the period of study. Pre

SAS programme, student 4 recorded a mean percentage absence of 14% pre SAS programme, which decreased to 4% post SAS programme. Student 4 was suspended in the second half of Term 3, when student 4 reached a level of 8%. Student 4 was referred from class at 4% pre SAS programme and this decreased to 1% post SAS programme. Her lateness, which peaked at 7% percent (mean 3%) pre SAS programme, decreased slightly post SAS programme, to a mean of 2%.

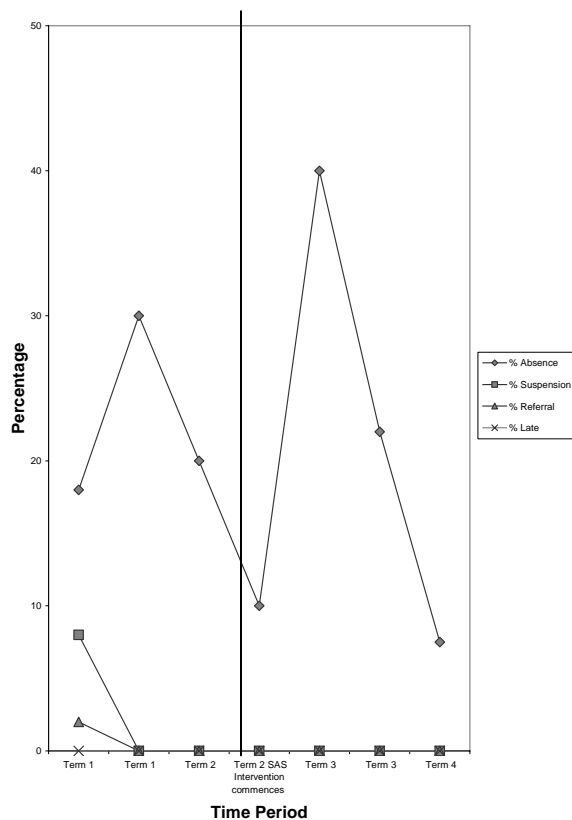


Figure 5: Percentage of absence, suspension, referral and lateness for student 5 prior to and following entry to the SAS programme

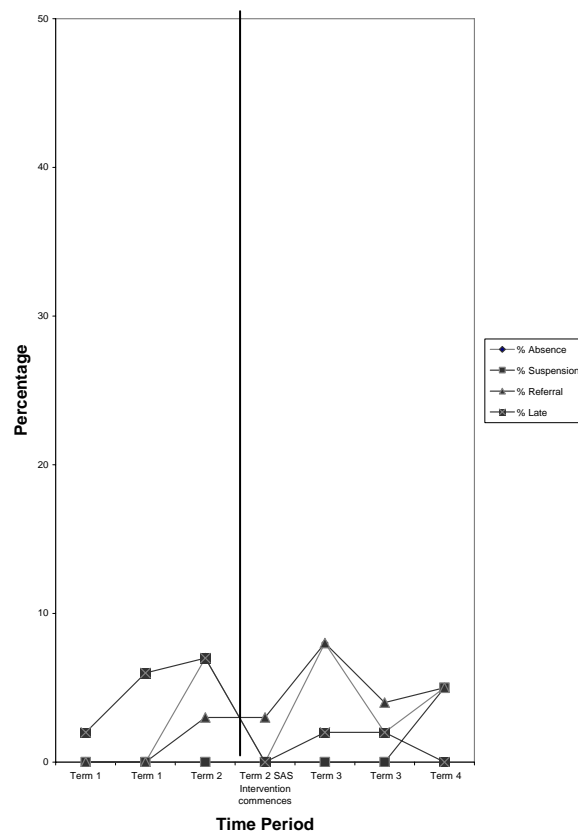


Figure 6: Percentage of absence, suspension, referral and lateness for student 6 prior to and following entry to the SAS programme

Figure 5 indicates the percentage of absences and suspensions from school, percentage referral from class and late to class for Student 5, over the period of study. Pre SAS, Student 5 had a high percentage of absence, peaking at 30%. His percentage absence was at it lowest on beginning the SAS programme, at 10%, but it increased to 40%, before

decreasing again towards the end of the study. Student 5's percentage absence from school, increased overall during the SAS programme. His percentage suspension and referral both decreased to zero pre SAS and remained at zero throughout the study. Student 5 was never late for class.

Figure 6 indicates the percentage of absences and suspensions from school, percentage referral from class and late to class for student 6, over the period of study. Student 6 increased her percentage absence when comparing pre and post SAS data, although her level remained low, always below 8%. Student 6 was not referred until term 4, when absences reached 5%. Student 6 increased her percentage referral, from a maximum of 3% pre SAS to a maximum of 8% during the SAS programme. Student 6 was late to class less frequently during the SAS programme.

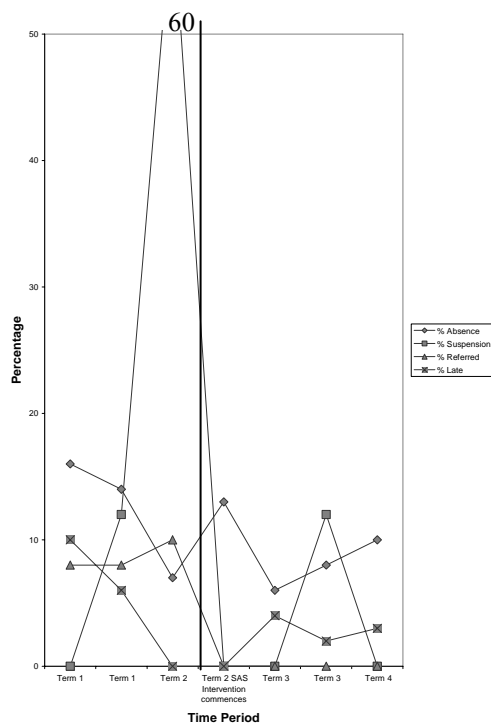


Figure 7: Percentage of absence, suspension, referral and lateness for student 3 prior to and following entry to the SAS programme

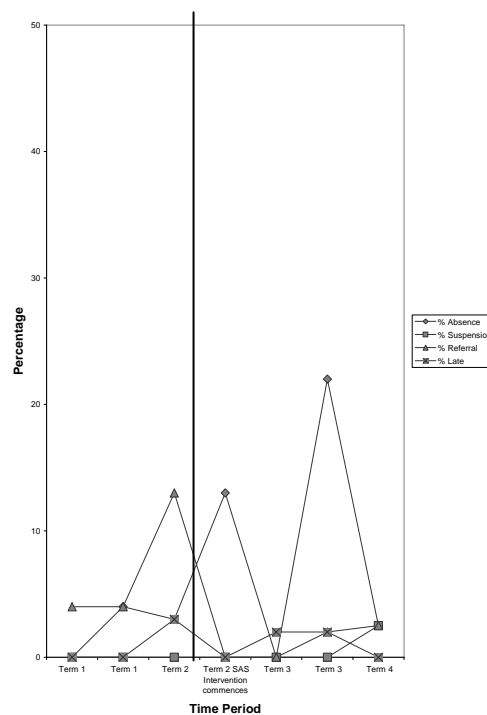


Figure 8: Percentage of absence, suspension, referral and lateness for student 4 prior to and following entry to the SAS programme

Figure 7 indicates the percentage of absences and suspensions from school, percentage referral from class and late to class for student 7, over the period of study. Student 7 decreased her percentage absence, suspension and referral and lateness following the SAS intervention. She was suspended at a maximum of 60%, pre SAS and a maximum of 10% during the SAS intervention.

Figure 8 indicates the percentage of absences and suspensions from school, percentage referral from class and late to class for student 8, over the period of study. Student 8 increased her percentage absence and suspensions from school and lateness to class following the SAS intervention. Her level of referral decreased from a maximum of 13% pre SAS, to a maximum of 3% during the SAS intervention.

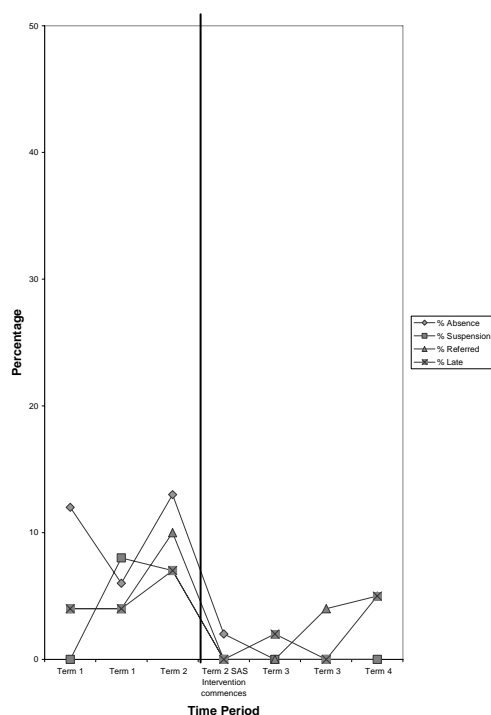


Figure 9: Percentage of absence, suspension, referral and lateness for student 3 prior to and following entry to the SAS programme

Figure 9 indicates the percentage of absences and suspensions from school, percentage referral from class and late to class for student 9, over the period of study.

Student 9 decreased his percentage of absence and suspensions from school, referrals and lateness to class following the SAS intervention. His maximum percentage absence was 14% pre SAS, compared to zero % throughout the SAS intervention.

Overall, figures 1 – 9 indicate the percentage of absence and suspensions from school, referrals and lateness to class for students 1 – 9 over the period of study. Students 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9 all decreased their percentage absence following SAS intervention. Students 3, 6 and 8 increased their percentage absence over this same period. Prior to the SAS intervention, students 2, 3, 5, 7 and 9 all recorded higher levels of suspension than following the intervention. However, the percentage of suspensions for students 4, 6 and 8 increased, while Student 1 remained on zero %. Students 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 all decreased their percentage of referral from class following the SAS intervention. Only student 6 increased her percentage of referrals over this period. Students 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 and 9 all decreased their percentage of lateness following the intervention. Student 3 was the only student who increased her percentage of lateness and students 5 and 8 remained the same on zero % and 1% respectively.

Table 8

The number of negative interactions and the rate of negative interactions made per hour by each student during the first, middle and last period of classroom observation

<i>Time</i>	<i>Week 5 – 9</i>		<i>Week 10 – 14</i>		<i>Week 15 – 19</i>	
	Negative interactions	Rate per hour	Negative interactions	Rate per hour	Negative interactions	Rate per hour
Student	N		N		N	
1	12	4.97	3	1.50	3	1.34
2	12	4.80	10	3.03	20	6.67
3	18	6.00	6	2.00	0	0.00
4	15	4.92	11	3.14	7	2.33
5	2	1.00	3	1.00	1	0.40
6	8	2.67	15	4.41	6	2.03
7	11	4.40	1	0.79	3	1.45
8	12	7.13	14	3.50	3	1.20
9	4	1.33	7	2.00	22	7.00
Group Mean		4.14		2.37		2.49

Table 8 indicates the number and rate per hour of negative interactions observed during direct observations for each student over the period of classroom observations. Students 1, 3, 4 and 8 decreased their rate of negative interactions over the period of observations. Student 2 and 7 also decreased their rate of negative interactions from the beginning to the middle of observations, but then increased their levels of negative interactions in week 15 – 19. Student 2, to a rate higher than in the first observation, whereas Student 7 was lower than in the first observation. Student 5's rate of negative interactions decreased from 1.00 to 0.40 in weeks 15 – 19. Student 6 increased the rate (n=2.67 to n=4.41) then decreased the rate of negative interactions (n= 2.03). Over the period of observations, Student 9 had an initial increase in negative interactions but by the final observation period, Student 9 had significantly increased his negative interactions from a rate

of 1.33 to 7.00 per hour. The mean rate of negative interactions decreased for all students from weeks 6 – 10 (n=4.14), to weeks 10 – 14 (n=2.37) but then increased slightly in weeks 15 – 19 (n=2.49).

Table 9

The number of teacher requests received and the percentage complied with by each student during the first, middle and last period of classroom observation

<i>Time</i>	<i>Week 5 - 9</i>		<i>Week 10 - 14</i>		<i>Week 15 - 19</i>	
	Teacher requests	Complied with	Teacher requests	Complied with	Teacher requests	Complied with
Student	N	%*	N	%*	N	%*
1	7	71	6	67	6	50
2	11	91	9	78	16	75
3	7	86	3	-	1	-
4	11	55	10	90	4	-
5	4	-	1	-	2	-
6	10	60	10	60	2	-
7	2	-	1	-	5	100
8	5	80	8	63	4	-
9	5	100	9	56	11	64
Group Mean		78		69		72

* Means calculated for those observations in which the student received 5 or more requests.

Table 9 indicates the number of teacher requests received and the percentage complied with by each student during the first, middle and last period of observation. Student 1 and 2 decreased their percentage of compliance over the period of observation; for student 1 from 71% to 67% and during the final weeks to 50%; for student 2, from 91% to 78%, then to 75%. Student 4 increased his percentage of compliance from 55% at the beginning to 90% in the middle of the observation. Less than 5 requests were given to Student 4 during the final observation, so a percentage was not calculated. Student 6 complied at 60% in the beginning and middle of the observation, whereas Students 8 and 9

decreased their percentage compliance from the beginning to the middle of the observation. Student 9 increased his compliance from 56% to 64% at the end of the observation. Overall the mean percentage compliance for the class decreased from 78% in weeks 5 – 9 to 69% in weeks 10 – 14. Compliance then increased to 72% in weeks 15 – 19.

Table 10

The total number of positive social interactions made and the percentage positive social interactions made by each student during the first, middle and last period of classroom observation

<i>Time</i>	<i>Week 5 - 9</i>		<i>Week 10 - 14</i>		<i>Week 15 -19</i>	
	Total positive social	Percentage positive social	Total positive social	Percentage positive social	Total positive social	Percentage positive social
Student	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	44	30	57	48	48	36
2	30	20	63	28	86	48
3	62	34	59	39	27	45
4	23	13	40	21	57	32
5	28	23	23	19	29	19
6	67	37	79	39	56	32
7	37	44	39	51	22	18
8	21	21	35	15	61	34
9	67	37	106	50	101	56
Group Mean		29		34		36

Table 10 indicates the percentage of positive social behaviour for each of the students observed throughout the period of observation. Student 1 increased his positive social behaviour from the beginning (30%) to middle (48%) of the observations. Positive social interactions then decreased at the end of the observation period (36%) but this was still above the first initial total of 30%. Student 2, 3, 4 and 9 all increased their percentage positive social behaviour consistently over the period of observations. Student 5 decreased his

positive social behaviour slightly from the beginning (23%) to the middle and end of the observations (19%). Student 6 and 7 increased and then slightly decreased their positive social behaviour over the period of observation. However, student 7 decreased his positive social interactions during the final phase from 51% mid way, to 18% during the final stage. Student 8 decreased her positive social behaviour from 21% to 15% in the middle of the observations. Social interaction then increased to 34% by the end of the observations. The overall mean for social interaction increased from 29% in week 5 – 9 to 34% in week 10 – 14 and then further increased to 36% in week 15 – 19.

Table 11

The total number on task and the percentage on task by each student during the first, middle and last period of classroom observation

<i>Time</i>	<i>Week 5 - 9</i>		<i>Week 10 - 14</i>		<i>Week 15 – 19</i>	
	Total on task	Percentage on task	Total on task	Percentage on task	Total on task	Percentage on task
Student	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	108	74	88	73	95	71
2	87	58	194	85	115	64
3	127	71	114	76	54	90
4	128	70	143	73	120	67
5	109	91	118	98	148	99
6	120	67	181	89	161	91
7	125	83	75	99	105	85
8	71	70	222	93	175	97
9	148	82	141	67	123	68
Group Mean		74		84		81

Table 11 indicates the number and the percentage on task for each of the students as observed over the period of observation. Student 1 became increasingly off-task over the period of observation; from 74%, to 73% and 71% on task, in weeks 15 – 19. Student 3, 5, 6

and 8 all increased their percentage on task over the period of the observations. Student 2, 4 and 7 increased their on task behaviour from the beginning to the middle and then decreased their percentage on task at the end of the observations. Student 9 decreased his percentage on task from 82% at the beginning to 67% in the middle, on task then stabilised at 68% by the end of the observations. The mean percentage on task initially increased from 74% in weeks 5 – 9 to 84% in weeks 10 – 14, which then decreased to 81% in weeks 15 – 19.

Table 12

Social Development Scale

Time	Week 6			Week 13			Week 19		
Student	Social	Anti-social	Total	Social	Anti-social	Total	Social	Anti-social	Total
1	53	52	105	51	51	102	64	63	127
2	38	34	72	41	37	78	53	50	103
3	50	43	93	52	38	90	54	56	110
4	54	57	111	36	49	85	58	53	111
5	39	56	95	47	60	107	59	64	123
6	42	40	82	34	48	82	57	57	114
7	55	49	104	57	56	113	60	61	121
8	43	51	94	55	57	112	59	59	118
9	45	46	91	52	52	104	57	56	113
Group Mean	47	48	94	47	50	97	58	58	116

Table 12 indicates the Social Development Scale (Church, Tyler-Merrick, & Hayward, 2006) scores for each student at the beginning, middle and end of the study. A perfect score of 150 indicates that a student was highly social (75 points) and not anti-social (75 points). According to Church et al (2006) students with a score of 113 or below probably meet the definition of antisocial development at their age level and students with 114 or above probably meet the definition of normal positive social development.

Students 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 increased their total scores from week 6 to week 13, except for student 4, who remained at 111. Student 1 decreased both his social and anti-social score from week 6 to week 13 then increased both scores for week 19. Students 2, 5,

7, 8 and 9 increased both their social and anti-social scores during each time frame. Student 3 decreased her anti-social score (43) from week 6 to week 13 (38), then increased her anti-social score to 56 for week 19.

The most socially developed student at the beginning of the study (week 6) was student 4 (score = 111), while the least socially developed student was student 2 (score = 72). All students, according to Church et al (2006) would be classified as anti-social at this stage. The most socially developed student at the middle of the study (week 13) was student 7 (score = 113), while the least socially developed student was student 2 (score = 78). Again, all students would be classified as being anti-social. The most socially developed student by the end of the study (week 19) was Student 1 (score = 127) and the least socially developed was Student 2 (score = 103). Students 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8 would be classified as meeting a definition for normal social development, whereas students 2, 3, 4 and 9 would be classed as anti-social.

Table 13

The scores for the backward number counting test for each student at week 2, week 10 and week 19

Time	Week 2	Week 10	Week 19
Student			
1	32	32	33
2	28	32	30
3	33	33	33
4	22	22	28
5	27	28	31
6	32	32	32
7	33	33	33
8	32	32	32
9	33	33	33
Group Mean	30	31	32

Table 13 represents the scores for the backward number counting test for each student at week 2, week 10 and week 19. Students 3, 7 and 9 were already at the ceiling for this test (n=33) and therefore had no room for improvement over the period of study. Students 1, 2, 5,

6 and 8 did not show a significant improvement in their scores. Student 4 was the only student to increase her total score, from 22 in week 2 to 28 in week 19.

Table 14

The scores for the digits correctly answered in the mathematics test for each student at week 2, week 10 and week 19

Time	Week 2	Week 10	Week 19
Student			
1	33	41	38
2	21	17	17
3	60	60	60
4	6	7	15
5	10	10	16
6	24	33	34
7	18	26	24
8	24	17	25
9	30	28	25
Group Mean	25	27	28

Table 14 represents the scores for the digits correctly answered in the mathematics test for each student at week 2, week 10 and week 19. The ceiling for this test was 60 digits per minute. Student 3 was at the ceiling for this test and therefore had no room for improvement from week 2 to week 19. Students 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 all increased their scores for the digits correctly answered from week 2 to week 19. Students 2 and 9 decreased their scores from week 2 to week 19.

Table 15

The scores for the graphemes correctly verbalised in one minute for each student for week 2, week 10 and week 19

Time	Week 2	Week 10	Week 19
Student			
1	117	125	135
2	69	91	89
3	100	120	150
4	82	99	78
5	29	40	43
6	105	110	130
7	88	110	125
8	93	83	90
9	97	97	102
Group Mean	87	97	105

Table 15 represents the scores for the graphemes correctly verbalised in one minute for each student in week 2, week 10 and week 19. The score of 80 was the cut off for improving in this test. Any student who scored over 80 in this test was classified as having no remedial need. Students 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9 all increased the number of graphemes correctly verbalised from week 2 to week 19. Students 4 and 8 decreased the number of graphemes correctly verbalised from week 2 to week 19. Students 2 and 5 were the only students who had significant difficulties in correctly verbalising graphemes.

Table 16

The number of characters per minute written during a compositional writing test for each student for week 2, week 10 and week 19

Time	Week 2	Week 10	Week 19
Student			
1	94	79	98
2	36	99	68
3	103	105	107
4	42	116	113
5	34	53	41
6	74	94	95
7	98	91	101
8	87	85	48
9	62	69	54
Group Mean	70	88	81

Table 16 represents the number of characters per minute written during a compositional writing test for week 2, week 10 and week 19. This test was calculated using an average of 5 characters per word. The ceiling for this test is approximately 126 characters. Students 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 increased the number of characters written per minute during the compositional writing test from week 2 to week 19. Students 8 and 9 decreased the number of characters written per minute from week 2 to week 19. Student 3 was considered as approaching the ceiling at week 2, and was expected to make little improvement in her score (range = 103 – 107).

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This project describing the Success at School programme at a secondary school in Christchurch, New Zealand has generated some interesting findings. When reviewing the nine students' academic and social behaviour, each student has progressed in some area of their development.

Overall programme

The results from this study indicated that six of the students were absent from school less when they were in the SAS programme than in their mainstream classes. The percentage of lateness to class declined also for six of the nine students over the course of the programme. A possible explanation for this result in a secondary school context could be because the students would previously have been exposed to a number of different teaching staff and thus teachers could not 'track' their attendance as effectively prior to attending the SAS programme. Once in the programme, the SAS teaching staff had only 11 students to monitor and they were also in close contact with parents and caregivers, so the SAS teachers were more able to pick up on absences and demand immediate explanations for these absences.

One of the school's aims for the SAS programme was to reduce the number of referrals out of class. The SAS programme appears to have met this aim for eight of the nine students, as the students were referred to the referral room less when they were in the SAS programme. There are several explanations for this finding. One explanation is that the high teacher to student ratio, of one teacher and one teacher aide to 11 students, allowed more time to be devoted to each student's social and academic behaviour, thus keeping them on appropriate tasks and therefore out of trouble. Anecdotal observations showed the teaching methods and tasks used by the SAS teacher were tailored to the needs of the individual

students. For example, often students were engaged in a variety of different activities related to the same subject. Work sheets were differentiated to meet the needs of individual students; thus the students level of interest and engagement increased; and as a result of these adaptations students were less likely to be sent to the referral room.

The results also indicated the SAS intervention increased the numeracy and literacy scores for six of the nine students over the period of study. Once again, one to one teaching and individual education programmes could have been a factor in each of the students' academic improvement. Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) reported fewer gains for students' academic achievement when compared directly against improvements made in their emotional, social and behavioural development, although these weren't quantified. It should also be noted that the participants in Cooper and Tiknaz's report focused on young children, not older students. Like Cooper and Tiknaz's findings, some of the students in the SAS programme who made few academic gains were found to have made more pro-social advances. Dwivedi (2004) suggests that emotional competence has a significant influence over the acquisition of learning development and proposes that learning can not take place in the absence of safety and acceptance of the teacher. In this study the students' numeracy and literacy improvements may also have been a result of the students having developed trust and a rapport with the SAS teachers.

The students' social behaviour was tracked over the course of the project. A wide range of on task behaviour, negative interactions, compliance to teacher instruction and positive social behaviour were observed. However, all but one of the students increased their pro-social skills as recorded by the Social Development Scale over the course of the project. To teach students to regulate and control their emotions, the SAS programme used the 'Program Achieve' programme (Bernard, 2001). This programme focussed on lesson success and emotional well-being and was used to assist the students to take responsibility for their

behaviour. This taught the students social skills, such as tolerance and playing by the rules. The students therefore learnt more positive ways of managing their relationships with fellow students and teachers in the SAS class. Students were regularly observed playing games together, such as cards, monopoly and draughts, and few problems related to social issues ever arose. The students often invited the author to partake in these activities. These games were included in the curriculum by the teacher to assist the development of social skills for the students. These games were played in good spirit and were often sort after. Boxall (2002) advocates the use of games to help students to interact and enjoy each others company in a safe and non-threatening environment. A combination of the 'Program Achieve' programme and the low teacher to student ratio, clear instructions and feedback, teacher monitoring and responding to individual needs when necessary, may have accounted for an improvement in the behaviour of the students.

The results showed that compliance with teacher requests were varied for all students. An explanation for this finding may be due to the problems the author encountered when recording compliance. A student who failed to respond to a teachers request once, caused the percentage result to be zero. In retrospect, attempts to record compliance would be altered to account for this limitation.

There was a small increase in the mean percentage of positive social behaviour for all students over the course of the study. Given the teacher-student ratio of one teacher and one teacher aide to 11 students it would be anticipated that within this small class, an increase in positive social behaviour would occur over time as students become more familiar with each other and with the teachers. Also positive relationships were identified as a weakness for most of the students prior to attendance in the SAS class so practice in the skills of positive social interaction became a regular focus for learning activities which were incorporated throughout the daily lesson structure and schemes of work for this class. Direct observations

confirmed shared food and opportunities to play games, as well as 'Program Achieve' gave the students the opportunity to interact more frequently and positively during lesson time. A possible explanation for the positive social behaviour increasing in small increments could be that these students required extra time to learn the social skills required to cooperate effectively in a group situation. The students were from different classes and required time to interact and get to know each other. It may take longer than 19 weeks to see a consistent change in positive social behaviour, although, anecdotally, the students did appear to have a sound rapport with the teacher and teacher aide. Boxall (2002) proposes students remain in a Nurture Group classroom for up to 4 terms, which equates to a year and a third in New Zealand. The New Zealand education system has four terms per year and therefore students may be expected to remain with a Nurture Group programme for at least a year and a term before results may be evident. It should be noted that some of the classes observed required the students to work independently, without communicating with their peers. In this instance, the opportunity for positive social behaviour could not be provided, thus could not be recorded.

The results for on task behaviour were also varied, across all students. All students initially showed an increase in their on task behaviour, but then this was followed by a decrease in mean percentage on task behaviour over the period of study. There are two possible explanations for this result. Initially, as the programme was new to the students and all students and their families consented to join the programme the students appeared to enjoy being in the class. Students were given incentives to complete good work and behave appropriately, such as to use the computers and to go on excursions. This may have extrinsically motivated them to remain on task. Secondly, the SAS staff formed positive relationships with the students and instilled guidelines and expectations of behaviour, so the students received clear behaviour guidelines and rules to follow that were fair and reasonable.

The high teacher to student ratio may have also assisted in keeping students on task, as student behaviour could be monitored more effectively. A possible explanation for students being more off task towards the end of the study, from observation and anecdotal evidence, could be that other teaching staff regularly facilitated learning in class when the SAS teacher was busy. The SAS teacher was required to fulfil a number of other obligations often at short notice, such as to trouble shoot, meet with care-givers and case workers all during school time. During some of the observations during weeks 15 – 19, the SAS teacher was in her office and therefore the teaching was being managed by the teacher aide and a relief teacher. This was often when disruption in learning and behaviour for the students occurred.

Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) suggest that students selected for a Nurture Group type intervention would be socially deficient, such as unable to form and sustain healthy relationships with others. The SAS programme made some small gains in the social development of the students. All the students in this study scored on the Social Development Scale (Church et al, 2006) below the 'norm' of 114 points in week 6 and in week 13 of the study. However, five students scored above the pro-social measure of 114 by the completion of this project. By the end of the study, students 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8 all increased their Social Development Score to above the 'normal' threshold advised by Church et al (2006), although it must be noted that these were not large gains. With the exception of Student 4, social functioning indicated the students were more pro-social and less anti-social by the end of the study than they were at the beginning of the study. This scale was completed by the teacher aide at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the study. Although differences in individual results could be due to scorer bias, this is unlikely as the teacher aide did not hold each of the previous student records for this scale. The results from the Social Development Scale were included in this study, even though they may be susceptible to scorer bias because the author considered the scale added depth and interest to the study and provided a true

reflection of each student's social progress throughout the project. This result is consistent with findings of Cooper and Tikhaz (2005), who found students increased their pro-social functioning when attached to a Nurture Group programme. Cooper and Lovey (1999), O'Connor and Colwell (2002), Colwell and O'Connor (2003) and Doyle (2001; 2005) also report this finding in their research but their findings were reported anecdotally.

Reintegration to the mainstream classes occurred for only two students over the course of the project. Only Students 3 and 7 were reintegrated back to the mainstream classes by week 19 of the study. The SAS teacher used the Sunderland Classroom Readiness Reintegration Scale (Doyle, 2001) to inform her of the students' readiness for reintegration to the mainstream class. The scores from this scale were generated by the SAS teacher and as a result could also be influenced by bias. Just like the Teachers Aide completing the Social Development Scale the SAS teacher may also have consciously or sub-consciously responded to the questions contained to indicate the students' improvement over time and thus make progress towards reintegration, even if they had not. The interpretation of a student's ability by a sole person is subjective and may be influenced by many factors. One influence could be the teacher's desire to make the programme work. Scales on their own are not an indicator of student success (or failure). A combination of a number of methods appears to be the best indicator of a student's readiness for reintegration to the mainstream classes. Interestingly, the score on the Social Development Scale indicated that Student 3 did not score above the 'normal' range of 114 and above, but Student 1 showed a consistent improvement in his score over all these phases of observations, with a total score of 127 recorded during the final phase. He was not considered for reintegration.

Cooper and Lovey (1999) and Boxall (2002) advocate the need for early intervention of children with social / academic and attachment concerns via the Nurture Group concept. All of the Nurture Group research cited was undertaken in the Primary school sector,

therefore it could be implied that Secondary school students may be too old or too late for a successful intervention. The school and the MoE / GSE were aware that Nurture Groups in the UK were Primary school based, but were willing to adapt the UK model to fit a New Zealand Secondary school situation and age range of 13-15 years old. Nurture Groups have recently been introduced into some Secondary schools on the UK, although these students would be aged 11-12 years old. The adaptations made in the SAS classroom included having shared meals at more appropriate times than breakfast, such as at morning tea or lunchtimes. Students were offered a broad range of educational experiences to reflect the Secondary curriculum and included outdoor activities, such as cycling and hill-walking, and also a cooking programme. One aim of the cooking course was to enable the students to become more adept and self sufficient in preparing meals that were nutritious and tasty, to assist them in life outside of school. Also computers played a more significant role in the learning for the SAS class, reflecting the interests and needs of teenagers in the present day.

One of the major factors that can influence the success and flexibility in the organisation of a Nurture Group programme is group composition (Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005). Through discussions with the SAS teacher and through observations, it became evident that the teacher had structured the composition of the class effectively, with a balance between male and female students. There were six females and five males in the SAS programme. There was also a balance in terms of different types of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the SAS class. Three of the 11 students were in the SAS programme due to their consistently poor behaviour in the mainstream classroom.

Another organisational factor that had a direct impact on the SAS programme was the length of time the Nurture Group had been in existence (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). This project was undertaken in the first year of the SAS intervention and the SAS teacher anecdotally reported that she planned to refine her practices in subsequent years of intake.

One change which was being considered was to allow individual students to remain in some mainstream classes, such as Physical Education while still being a part of the SAS programme. This would enable students to keep some connection with their mainstream classmates and assist with the reintegration process. This move is in line with the suggestions of J. Rose (personal communication, January 31, 2007), during a Nurture Group conference held in Christchurch. The teacher and teacher aide may also review the structure of the programme to allow them timetabled meeting times, and pre-planned free periods for themselves, as they often did not have scheduled breaks for planning or for their own meal breaks.

Individual progress

Individually the students showed different progress during the course of the study. Before entering the SAS programme Student 1 was often absent from school. The SAS teacher indicated that student 1 was having some mental health concerns for which he was assessed during the programme. The exact nature of these problems was uncertain. Due to his frequent absences his ability to concentrate and remain on task in class was problematic as he was often in 'catch up mode' and thus missed many valuable learning opportunities. Upon entry to the programme, Student 1's absence was still variable but he did make some sound social connections with peers within the SAS class, to such an extent that by the end of the study he said during his student interview he would discuss his problems with two other boys on the SAS programme. These social connections could account for the decrease in his negative interactions. However, the interviews suggest very little other change in Student 1 over the period of study. Also, he did not indicate any attachments to the SAS staff at any stage during the period of study. His home life appeared erratic. He often stayed up late, watching television and playing computer games throughout the night and a lack of personal hygiene may have had an influence over his peer friendships and his subsequent behaviour.

Lack of security in the home has been cited as a reason for school failure (Bowlby, 1992; DfES, 2001; O’Conner & Colwell, 2002). Lack of parental supervision and inconsistent consequences for poor behaviour have also been identified as a reason for conduct disorders (Dwivedi, 2004). Willock (1990) identifies safety and protection as an important role of a parent. Without parental control the child may suffer from physical or mental harm and may be prone to neglect. Student 1’s lack of personal hygiene may suggest this. The interviews suggest Student 1 did also not appear to value school. He seemed to relish getting into trouble, missing classes and ‘messaging around’ with his peers. As a result of this inappropriate social behaviour Student 1’s on task, positive social interactions and compliance results were all low.

The regular classroom teacher records indicate Student 2 found mainstream classes difficult, but once in the SAS programme he appeared to benefit from the high staff to student ratios that the SAS class provided. He did take time to settle into the SAS class and to make progress and towards the end of the study made some attachment to the Teacher Aide in the SAS programme. Bennathan and Boxall (2005) indicate that some students may need more time than others to make connections with the staff and students before they can begin to make progress in other areas, such as social and learning development. Once settled, Student 1 progressed both socially and academically. Interestingly, by the end of the programme Student 2 spent less time on task than observed at the beginning of the programme. A possible explanation for this finding could be that his social interactions and confidence had increased sufficiently for him to be able to socially interact with his peers and therefore distract him from his academic work. Once Student 2 was settled into the programme his negative interactions increased slightly. The direct observations and anecdotal discussions with the teachers indicated Student 2 often began social interactions with his peers with good intent, but often the discussion was inappropriate and he could easily offend others. He liked

to gossip and discuss personal matters inappropriate for the classroom setting, and this sometimes caused disruption and conflict with his peers and also with his teachers, thus negative interactions occurred.

In his interviews, Student 2 said he believed the programme was working for him ‘in every way’. He said the programme helped him develop connections with the SAS staff and to discover new interests, such as cooking, softball club and a youth group. According to the definition by DfES (2001, p.iv), which includes “participating in educative and other social activities”, this finding could suggest that Student 2’s mental health had improved. It may also indicate Student 2 was developing some attachments to the SAS staff.

Student 3 was one of the two students who were reintegrated into the mainstream classes during the course of the study. Student 3’s reintegration into the Maori class began in week 7 of this study. This reintegration was successful and in week 12 she was reintegrated into the Maths class (middle of Term 3). She was then fully reintegrated in all her mainstream classes by the end of this project, although there were occasions when Students 3 returned to the SAS class when problems arose. Mainly these were connected to personal difficulties, such as relationship issues with fellow students in her Maori class. Student 3 appeared to use the SAS class as a safety net when these problems interfered with her ability to learn.

On reintegration to the mainstream classes in Term 3, Student 3’s absences from class increased. From the student interviews, Student 3 reported that she was struggling to identify with the personalities in her new mainstream class which she had not attended prior to joining the SAS class. She was also able to miss class frequently without detection because she told the mainstream teacher she was with the SAS class. Anecdotally, the teacher reported Student 3 used the SAS class as ‘scape-goat’ for explaining absences to her new mainstream teachers. This problem was quickly addressed by the SAS teacher once it was exposed.

Communication between mainstream and the SAS teacher was identified as an important factor to the successful reintegration of students who attended the SAS programme and the mainstream class. Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) also identified the need for good communication between mainstream and nurture group staff. They also expressed concerns over students missing sections of the curriculum. To overcome the communication problem, Cooper & Tiknaz (2005) suggest that the responsibilities of the mainstream teacher and Nurture Group teacher require clarification and are clearly stated so there is no miscommunication. Another factor was that students in the SAS class were within the confines of a single classroom for much of the day and were possibly susceptible to fewer outside influences from peers and other teachers within the mainstream school, so follow-up was difficult when teachers were busy in their roles. Communication is essential when the SAS teacher requires support from the wider school network particularly when students are reintegrated and to ensure the SAS teacher and programme does not become detached from the school.

The SAS teacher used the results from the Sunderland Reintegration Readiness Scale, to indicate that Student 3 was ready for reintegration to the mainstream. It is interesting to note that although this scale indicated Student 3 was ready for reintegration, discussions with the SAS staff, evidence from student interviews and observations in the classroom indicated that possibly Student 3 was not ready for reintegration. Towards the end of the study Student 3 was still truanting or late for class and on occasions used physical violence against other classmates. Her interviews indicated a possible lack of stability, maturity and confidence in the mainstream setting.

Anecdotally the SAS teacher reported Student 3 was targeted for the SAS programme due to her behaviour; she was suspended from school prior to joining the SAS programme and not allowed to return to school until the programme started. She was also suspended

from school once again when the reintegration to mainstream classes had begun. This finding could suggest that she was not ready for reintegration or maybe she had not stayed in the programme long enough to produce a sustained change in her behaviour or attitude. Student 3's behaviour could also suggest that the Reintegration Readiness Scale (Doyle, 2001), was not effective in identifying that she was ready for reintegration. Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) report that some students have difficulty relocating into the mainstream after prolonged periods of Nurture Group provision and that a students' lack of social skills could also be a major factor in reintegration success. Student 3 did not have a long period in the SAS programme and her subsequent aggressive behaviour was a factor in her lack of success in the mainstream. Another perspective could be that Student 3 did not have attachment disorder, but a behaviour disorder and would therefore not benefit from a Nurture Group programme. Walker, Ramsey & Gresham (2004) suggests that students with attachment disorders often present as antisocial, however, we can not conclude that all antisocial students have attachment disorders. For this reason selection to any Nurture Group could be problematic.

Once in the SAS programme Student 3 appeared to be able to focus more on her studies once she had settled into the class. This finding is consistent with the findings of Cooper and Lovey (1999), who state that students need time to feel comfortable in their environment before they are able learn. Although her percentage of on task behaviour decreased towards the end of the study, it was still high at 90%, with this being an acceptable level for percentage time on task for any student in any class. Student 3 was of high academic ability and adapted quickly to the environment of the SAS class. The main focus for Student 3's interactions was with one other student, also of fairly high academic ability and the SAS staff.

The interviews suggest Student 3 developed attachments to the SAS staff over the period of study, as she made frequent reference to the Teacher aide and spoke fondly of him. However, through discussions with staff members, it appears that Student 3 also developed some affiliation to a local gang. MacFarlane (2000) suggests links with the whānau are essential to the success of education initiatives in school. Student 3 had a close relationship with her whānau, but they did not live locally. At home, she had a poor relationship with her mother, whom she lived with and she described her home life as being “dysfunctional”; so it was not possible to include her whānau in the SAS programme. Reintegration to the mainstream was not successful for Student 3. She was suspended from school towards the end of the study for physically assaulting another student. Student 3 showed no remorse, and was permanently excluded from school a few weeks after the study concluded.

Student 4 was a fairly timid and shy girl and it was identified by the mainstream teachers that she was bullied prior to entry to the SAS programme. Her self-confidence, self-control and maturity appeared to increase over the period of study as she increased her positive social and compliance behaviours, whereas her rate of negative interactions decreased. Anecdotally, the teacher reported towards the end of the study that Student 4 experienced some relationship difficulties with certain peers within the SAS class and perhaps by focussing on work she was able to close herself off from personal issues and difficulties inside the classroom. Student 4 was uncooperative in the interviews at the beginning and middle of the study. She was defensive and reluctant to answer questions and shouted monosyllabic responses to the questions. However, at the final interview she was cooperative and helpful. One explanation for this sudden change in behaviour was that the author and her children had met Student 4 out of school time at a social setting and from that moment on she appeared to be more cooperative and friendly towards the author and helpful at her interview. Her interviews indicated she had built more effective relationships with

students and staff in the SAS classroom towards the end of the study, with some trust being developed. For example, Student 4 shared personal information with the author in the final interview. It was only in the final interview that Student 4 made reference to any friends. Colwell and Conner (2003) report that positive communication between the teacher and student and student and student in the classroom has a direct impact on increasing the self-esteem of students within the Nurture Group classrooms and thus she may have felt comfortable to share information with adults.

The student interviews also suggest Student 4 had a difficult home environment. For example she said she had been running away and would possibly be placed with another caregiver in the near future if her behaviour did not improve. This may have impacted on her behaviour in the SAS classroom. O’Conner and Colwell (2002) propose lack of security in the home can have a significant influence on behaviour. One example of poor behaviour, as reported in the SAS teacher’s diary, was due to Student 4 stealing money from the SAS teacher. Student 4 was suspended from school on this occasion.

Discussions with the SAS staff also suggested Student 4 had a strained relationship with her birth mother, who suffered from her own mental health problems. Student 4 had been living with another family member for some time and they were having difficulties controlling Student 4’s behaviour. This behaviour also included stealing from her caregiver and wandering the streets late at night. As mentioned, her care-giver had been considering finding alternative care for Student 4. This could suggest Student 4 had an “abnormal pattern of attachment to [her] caregivers” (DfES, 2001, p.1). This lack of attachment could have been the cause of her anti-social behaviour and stealing that Student 4 exhibited.

Student 4’s Social Development Scale Score decreased in the middle of the study to a score of 85, from 111 at the start of the programme. A possible explanation for this decrease in score could be that she was encountering difficulties at home and school, as indicated by

her interviews. By the end of the study, Student 4 was at the same Social Development Scale score as when she began the programme, so it appears that little progress was being made in this area of her development.

Nurture Groups do not usually cater for students with disabilities, however Student 5 was diagnosed as having Aspergers Disorder and Dyspraxia. Aspergers is a mild form of autism. Symptoms include social isolation, communication difficulties and a narrow range of interests (Kutscher, 2005). Dyspraxia, is also called clumsy child syndrome and is characterised by processing difficulties in development (Dyspraxia, 2007). Anecdotally the SAS teacher reported that Student 5's mother was particularly protective of him due to his Aspergers and Dyspraxia. The symptoms of his disabilities made him susceptible to ridicule from his peers. This may account for his relatively high percentage of absences (range= 10-40%) throughout the study. When at school, Student 5 was well behaved in class. His on task behaviour was recorded at 99% at the end of the study, which is abnormally high, indicating an intense focus on his studies. Student 5 improved in all of the academic tests each time they were administered, with the exception of the final compositional writing test. This overall result indicates there was a direct relationship between percentage of on task behaviour and his academic improvement in numeracy and literacy. The high staff to student ratio in the SAS class may also account for Student 5's improvement in academic performance, where he received 1:1 attention and a programme adapted to his academic needs. The interviews showed that Student 5 had few interests except for TV and his computer. He appeared to have few social connections inside or outside of school, although in the final interview he indicated he trusted both the SAS Teacher and the Teacher Aide. Anecdotal observations suggest Student 5 was making progress with his social interactions. He regularly played card games with other students in the SAS class and was making more social connections, such as talking more with the SAS staff. Student 5 reported his disability

made the mainstream environment very difficult for him; he did not like moving from class to class and from teacher to teacher. Student 5 also said he was very concerned about returning to the mainstream class because he didn't like the students there; he reported they had been unkind to him in the past. Student 5 appeared to respond well to the small grouping and enjoyed the structure that the SAS class provided. This finding is not surprising as people with Aspergers generally respond well to structure and small groupings (Kutscher, 2005).

Student 6 encountered some peer relationship difficulties in the SAS classroom. For example, she appeared to seek friends within the class whom she considered weaker and attempted to control them by forcing them to follow her behaviour and verbally and physically intimidating them. Student 6 also mentioned in her interviews her friendship with another SAS student. It appeared that this friendship was based on Student 6 asserting power over this friend and this often resulted in Student 6 physically and verbally abusing this student. As a consequence, her referrals to the referral room and suspensions from school increased.

Academically Student 6 progressed well over the study. Her on task behaviour increased progressively. The reasons for this may be due to her forming effective relationships with the SAS staff, where she interacted positively with them and complied with instructions. The high staff to student ratio may also have assisted with her studies. Student 6 said she would probably trust the Teacher Aide with her secrets during the final interview.

Student 7 began reintegration to the mainstream classes in week 7 of the SAS programme. She was fully reintegrated by the end of this project, although there were occasions when Student 7 returned to the SAS class when problems arose. These problems included relationship issues with peers, such as intimidating students who were physically weaker than herself, and the teacher reported an apparent lack of motivation to succeed in the mainstream.

Over the course of the SAS programme, Student 7's absences and referrals from class, suspensions from school and lateness's to class all decreased. Student 7 appeared to respond well to the structure of the class and to the increase in attention given to her by the SAS staff. She said that she would trust both the SAS Teacher and the Teacher Aide with her personal secrets, indicating she trusted them. Student 7 was in the second from top academic mainstream class prior to joining the SAS class, which indicated she was academically above average. However, discussions with teaching staff showed she had a tendency to exhibit aggressive outbursts and give verbal abuse to other students. Over the course of the programme she appeared to learn to control her anger, as her rate of negative interactions to adults and peers decreased from 4.40 in weeks 5-9 to 1.45 in weeks 15-19. Her interviews and her work submitted to the teacher showed she appeared to be adopting a more positive and mature attitude to school; "I used to go around looking for trouble, but I don't anymore", she said in her middle interview.

Student 7 was fairly independent, self assured and aloof and appeared not to need social acceptance from the other members of the SAS class. Student 7 said in her interviews that she had encountered personal difficulties while living with her grandparents and that this was affecting her level of concentration at school. Anecdotal reports from the SAS teacher suggest the turbulent relationship with her caregiver may have been interfering with her progress towards reintegration.

Student 8 made some gains in the SAS programme. However her absence from class increased from 2% pre-SAS programme to 9% following SAS intervention. Student 8 appeared unsettled towards the end of the study. An explanation could be that she was in the process of moving from one caregiver to alternative foster care. This instability and change may have been the cause of her increase in absences during this period. She was suspended once during this period. O'Conner and Colwell (2002) also report that outside influences,

such as the home background and changes in family circumstances may affect students and their progress at school.

Student 8 decreased her rate of negative interactions progressively over the period of study. Student interviews and direct observations indicate Student 8 was showing more pro-social behaviour in the SAS classroom. For example, she appeared to be more contented and confident in class and she did not disrupt the learning of other students. Student 8 said during the middle and final interviews that she would confide in the Teacher Aide if she needed to discuss personal issues, indicated she had developed a trust and possible attachment towards him. Her positive social interactions and her percentage of on task behaviour increased progressively from mid to the end of the study. This increase coincided with the change in care-giver. Student 8 appeared to appreciate her new foster care and as a result of being more settled at home, she was more settled in class. However, she did not show any academic improvement over the period of study. There appears to be no logical explanation for this, but during the final student interview Student 8 indicated that she didn't value herself very highly, as she only thought she was good at spelling and nothing else.

Student 9 entered the programme because he was prone to aggressive behavioural outbursts and mood swings at school. Student 9 decreased his absences, suspensions from school, referrals to the referral room and lateness's to class during the course of the study, but his negative social interactions and off task behaviour increased. He showed no academic improvement and his compliance with the teachers requests also decreased. His student interviews suggest he did not appear to be lacking in self esteem, he was Maori and a had a good relationship with his mother and spent much of his time with his whānau , whom he spoke of fondly and regularly to the author. Student 9 also said he would share his problems with the teacher aide, indicating he had developed a trust and possible attachment towards him.

The SAS programme, while not a Māori initiative, adopted many of the principles which Macfarlane (2000) deems to be important in effecting change in Māori students. These include such concepts as collaboration with whānau and a focus on good behaviour, based on tika (justice), pono (integrity), and aroha (love). The SAS programme provided a similar model with Student 9's whānau regularly attending SAS functions, such as shared meals and excursions and where good behaviour was a focus and modelled by teachers.

A visit to the school four months after this present project concluded indicated the following occurring for the students. Student 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 were still at school, although their individual progress was mixed. Student 1 was no longer attending school, as he was 'working'. Student 2 had been asked to leave and was finding another school. Student 3 had been permanently excluded. Student 7 had left the school, possibly to attend another school for reasons unknown. Overall five of the nine students were in mainstream classes, while the remaining four no longer attended the school.

The gains which were achieved as a result of the SAS programme were small and it can not be suggested that they be attributed directly to the Nurture Group concept. The reasons why the SAS programme had very little effect on the students' social and academic behaviour are complex. All of the students, except Student 1 indicated they had formed a close relationship with one or both of the SAS teaching staff. As Student 1 did not make significantly more or less progress academically or socially than the other students, it appears that forming attachments are not a prerequisite to learning and can not be directly attributed to any gains that have been made. Some of the students within the SAS programme appeared to require more intensive specialist help, although this was outside both the philosophy of the programme and the resources available.

Limitations of this study

There were several limitations to this present study. The measures of academic achievement, particularly the backward number count test, did not provide enough scope to see academic improvement over time for some of the SAS students. A pilot study would have been useful to ensure which range of academic tests would effectively gauge the students' ability.

Inter-observer reliability was difficult to achieve, particularly for compliance. It was often difficult to gauge when and if a teacher request had been made. For example, the teacher aide may have given a general instruction and it was difficult to see who this instruction was for. To overcome this problem, more practice in the classroom was required so that the author and observer could respond appropriately to the compliance definition.

This study was descriptive in nature. This was because the author was unable to gather baseline data before the students entered the programme. A future study could focus on the pre-intervention (i.e. baseline) when the students still attended their mainstream classes. Further data would then be gathered during the intervention programme, followed by data gathering a year later.

No data was gathered on the Principal and mainstream staff's perceptions of the effectiveness of the SAS programme throughout the study, so a comparison cannot be made as to whether this study is consistent with previous studies on Nurture Groups which revealed benefits to the wider school (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

A control group of mainstream peers was not used to measure effective social or academic progress against the students attending the SAS programme. Therefore there is no certainty that the SAS students progressed any more in the SAS programme than they would have in the mainstream programme.

All the studies which have been reviewed in this present study are based on primary school interventions in the UK, whereas the SAS programme is in a secondary school in New Zealand, so no comparison across schools or ages can be made in terms of the results of this study.

Many of these limitations could be successfully addressed in any future studies in New Zealand involving the Nurture Group concept.

CONCLUSION

The SAS programme attempted to improve the academic and social behaviours of 11 students at a New Zealand secondary school. This project reported on nine of these students and found all nine students showed small gains over most of the behaviours measured. Some students improved their academic achievement, whereas others became more pro-social or became more focused on their class work. This study was important because the Nurture Group concept is new to the New Zealand educational context and the success of Nurture Groups in a secondary school setting was unknown. The students all appeared to benefit from the high student / teacher ratio, the structured environment, the curriculum adapted to suit their needs and from the social skills programme that was provided. All but one student appeared to form a trusting relationship with the SAS teaching staff.

The SAS programme did make small gains in the numeracy and literacy skills of some students and decreasing truancy, suspension and stand downs in the majority of the SAS students. These aspects were identified as the schools key educational objectives of the programme. Small gains were made in the students' social, emotional and behavioural skills and for five of the students it is unclear if these skills increased significantly to enable them to function successfully in fulltime mainstream education in the future. Unfortunately, for four of the students this was not so, as they have now left school.

The overall results indicate that for a very small number of students, the SAS programme was helpful to them for addressing their learning and social needs and that they did appear to build a trusting relationship with their teachers. However, only small gains were made and it is not clear if these gains were due to just the Nurture Group concept or for a combination of other factors, such as the small group size, individual learning programmes or the social skills programme that was utilised.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Aims of the programme

Education goal

The Overall goal of the project is to use nurture group principles to increase specific students' social, emotional and behavioural skills, in order that they may be able to function successfully in fulltime mainstream education. This overarching goal will also address numeracy and literacy rates in at-risk students, while helping to reduce truancy, suspension and stand down rates.

Education objectives

1. Increase numeracy and literacy rates in selected students.
2. Decrease truancy, suspension and stand down rates in selected students.
3. Increase adaptive functioning and decrease frequency of aggressive/ violent behaviour as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997).
4. Increase classroom readiness skills as measured by the Reintegration Readiness Scale (Doyle, 2001)

APPENDIX II

Semi-structured interview

I'd like to talk you about trust and the people you may confide or share your secrets or problems with... remember what you tell me is confidential. I will not be discussing them with anyone or disclosing any details which may identify you personally in my study. You only have to tell me what you are comfortable with sharing and if you'd rather not tell me certain information, then that's fine, just say so.

1. **Are there any people that you know that you trust and would share a secret or discuss a problem with? Who would these people be?**

Probes

A health problem?

Your parents? A best friend? A counsellor? A teacher?

- Who could you turn to if you were having problems at home?**

Probes

Maybe your mum is giving you a hard time about the way that dress...

or your dad is getting on your case about you staying out too late ...

or hanging out with certain people...

or your school work...

or your attitude...

or something else?

Grandparents / others?

2. **Who do you live with at home?**

Describe what it's like at home...

Who do you feel close to?

3. **Do you belong to any groups? Cultural, sports, youth, church...**

4. **Who could you turn to if you were being hassled at school?**

Probes

Why them?

5. **Let's talk about friends...**

Do you have many friends?

Probes

A best friend? A group of mates?

What kind of things do you do together?

How much time would you spend with them?

6. **Is there anyone else that you trust right now?**

Who do you respect or admire?

Why?

Let's talk a bit more about you...

7. What are you good at?

Probes

Are there any things that you think you are good at?

At home?

At school?

In the community?

8. What are the things that are important to you?

Probes

What do you value or believe in?

Tell me about your good qualities?

Sport? Family? Friends? Games... what kind? Computers?

9. If you're having a bad day, for example, you missed the bus, it's raining, your uniform wasn't dry, you're late for school, and you got a detention...

How do you feel?

What do you do?

How may others know you are having a bad day?

Whose fault is it?

How do you feel when another class member is having a bad day?

Could you excuse his/her behaviour for any reason?

10. What do you want to do when you leave school?

Why?

11. Is there anything else to do with the programme that you'd like to tell me?

APPENDIX III

Semi-structured interviews: Student 1

The following is a summary of the interviews with student 1 at the beginning on the 13th June (Interview 1), middle on the 29th August (Interview 2) and at the end 9th November (Interview 3), of the study.

Attachments

Student 1 lived with his mother and two brothers. He said he trusted his uncle and mentioned him during interviews 1 and 2. He identified his cousin as his best friend in all three interviews and said that he spent time with him and stayed overnight at his place on occasions. During the three interviews, student 1 stated he had no attachment with any of his teachers or counsellors and would not share problems with them. During interview 3, student 1 discussed two other male students from the SAS programme, whom he would talk to if he was being hassled at school.

Emotional well-being

Student 1 did not appear to be very well connected to his mother, whom he lived with for the majority of the time. He did not mention her as someone he could trust or talk to, although she was someone he valued in the first interview, when prompted. Student 1 said he only valued his computer, play station, dog and cat in the second and third interviews. He said he was good at reading and computers in all three interviews. In interview 1, he said he was also good at sport, maths, English, writing stories and cooking; in 2, he mentioned rugby, biking and cricket; in 3, reading and computers were his only strengths. His perspective when asked about having a bad day ranged from “I’d laugh” at the beginning of the study to

“I wouldn’t go to school” in Interviews 2 and 3. Student 1 was optimistic about life, with a firm career goal throughout, to become a volcanologist or seismologist.

Other comments

Student 1 said during interview 1 he was in the SAS programme due to problems he was having with one teacher in class (Interview 1). He got angry when people ‘get smart’ (Interview 1). He enjoyed the SAS programme because “I’m not getting told how to do everything” (Interview 1). In interviews 1 and 2, student 1 indicated a lack of boundaries in his home life. He had a play station in his room, which he played until he fell asleep at 10.30pm (Interview 1). While staying at his auntie’s house, who was out most of the night, he and his cousin stayed up most of the night (Interview 2). In interview 3, student 1 was again staying at his auntie’s house. He said he would stay there until he got bored and decided to return home. Student 1 stopped taking medication for a chest infection, mid way during the project, and also removed his own plaster cast for a broken arm. In interview 2, he said he was looking forward to returning to mainstream to see how many times he could be referred. In interview 3, student 1 said the difference with being in the SAS class was not being referred as much and now he was doing more work. He was anticipating returning to mainstream “so I can bunk more”.

Semi-structured interviews: Student 2

The following is a summary of the interviews with student 2 at the beginning on the 15th June (Interview 1), in the middle 21st August (Interview 2) and at the end 19th October (Interview 3), of the study.

Attachments

All three interviews indicated a general lack of trusting relationships with people from home, school or community. In interview 1, a sister in law was mentioned as a possible

confidant and some boys who live near by to “hang out with” and to “run around causing havoc [with]”. In interviews 2, student 2 said he would keep his secrets to himself and in 3, he mentioned a girl, who he has been his friend for 2 terms and is at school, along with, an older brother and the teacher aide. Student 2 did not belong to any groups in interviews 1 or 2, although in interview 2 he said he went to the skate park in town. In interview 3 he had joined the school softball team, staffed by the teacher aide and was also beginning an after school activity programme.

Emotional well-being

Student 2 appeared to lack emotional connections, judging by the short term nature of many of his relationships. He believed he was good at eating, sport; specifically rugby, biking and Physical Education (PE) in 1. In interview 2, his strengths were cooking and PE, while in interview 3 he solely mentions sport. Student 2 valued or believed in his dog in all three interviews and his mum in interview 1 and 3. Student 2’s perspective when asked about a bad day was to be angry in interview 1 “take it out on anyone who pissed me off”, whereas in interview 2, he would walk away and interview 3 he said he had learnt not to blame anyone. Student 2 is optimistic about life, wanting to be a butcher, as a career option throughout, although he also mentioned becoming a cook in interview 2.

Other comments

In interview 1, Student 2 said the SAS is different from his last class because “I don’t have people crowding round my desk... making fun of me”. He believed the programme was working for him in many ways at this stage. In the final interview student 2 appeared concerned about reintegration when asked if he is looking forward to it. When it happens he said the teacher or teacher aide would accompany him to his classes at first. He was really

looking forward to returning to structured PE classes, as “we don’t get out and do PE that much”.

Semi-structured interviews: Student 3

The following is a summary of the interviews with student 3 at the beginning on the 13th June (Interview 1), middle on the 22nd August (Interview 2) and at the end 26th October (Interview 3), of the study.

Attachments

Student 3 did not appear to be emotionally attached to her mother, who she lived with, along with her siblings. In interview 1, she said her home was “dysfunctional” and she didn’t like being at home; it was just a roof over her head. Student 3 appeared to have good friendships, spending much time with peers and playing a great deal of sport in all 3 interviews. She was a regional sports representative. In 3, she said she had over 20 friends. She would discuss school problems with teachers and valued her relationship the teacher aide in interviews 2 and 3.

Emotional well-being

Student 3 appeared not to be emotionally connected to her mother. In interview 1 and 2, she said she was good at sport, maths and PE, whereas in 3 she only mentioned sport. Student 3 valued her family, including her brothers, sisters, cousins, nieces and nephews and also her friends. In interview 2, Student 3 mentioned her mum was important to her. Her perspective on having a bad day was that it would be her fault, in interview 1. In interview 2, Student 3 said she would be really annoyed and go home and in interview 3 she said she would go nuts, and then try to find a solution to the problem. Student 3 was optimistic for her future, wanting to join the Air Force in interviews 1 and 2. In interview 3, she wanted to

attend the New Zealand Institute of Sport, but was not very confident of her chances. Her self-esteem appeared to be fairly low.

Other comments

Student 3 believed she was put into the SAS class because she got smart with the teachers and was often referred (Interview 1). In interview 2, she thought the programme must have worked for her, as she was being reintegrated. Student 3 was academically bright and was reintegrated into the top class rather than the mixed ability Maori class she had been in previously. In the final interview student 3 expressed difficulties integrating into the top class “because they scream heaps” and she didn’t get along with any of them. She believed the work to be too difficult. In the final interview, student 3 said she did not attend all the classes she should and either sat outside the class or returned to the SAS class when she chose.

Semi-structured interviews: Student 4

The following is a summary of the interviews with student 4 at the beginning on the 13th June (Interview 1), in the middle on the 22nd August (Interview 2) and at the end of the study on the 19th October (Interview 3). In the first two interviews, student 4 was very defensive and it was difficult to glean results. Her level of maturity seemed to be below her years. However in the final interview student 4 appeared to be more relaxed and open with her answers.

Attachments

Student 4 said she would tell her mum a personal secret in the first interview and she would tell her family in the second interview. In the final interview, she would trust the SAS teacher, the teacher aide, her caregiver, not her mum, but some of her friends. It was only in the final interview that student 4 discussed having friends or spending time with them. In

interviews 1 and 2, she said she belonged to a couple of community groups, but said she didn't have any friends there, but in the final interview she had joined the school softball club instead, run by the teacher aide.

Emotional well-being

Student 4 did appear to have some emotionally connectedness to her care-giver throughout the study. However, in the final interview, she said she may be put in foster care next year because she had been “running away and everything”. For all three interviews, Student 4 said she was good at running and singing, although she did not belong to any specific clubs. In fact in the first interview, student 4 said in her spare time “I’m just at home and everything’s boring”. She valued her cats (Interviews 1, 2) and discussed her interest in animals at length in the final interview. Here, she also mentioned a friend in another town who has a baby, who she liked to spend time with as she liked babies. Her perspective of a bad day in interview (Interview 3) was that she would be frustrated and take it out on everyone. Her optimism for the future was to become a “pet person” (Interview 2) and a vet (Interview 3).

Other comments

In the final interview Student 4 believed that next year would “Pretty hard... because of all the kids. All the kids will be there and might end up starting to be nasty to you [as they were before]”. She would rather stay in the SAS class.

Semi-structured interviews: Student 5

The following is a summary of the interviews with student 5 at the beginning on the 22nd June (Interview 1), middle on the 29th August (Interview 2) and at the end 19th October (Interview 3), of the study. In all three interviews Student 5 often responded to questions in a

bizarre fashion. He would draw out his answers, laugh or shout on random occasions and speak with a silly voice.

Attachments

Student 5 decided he would not share a secret with anybody in each interview, although he later reported that he could talk to his mum if he was having problems at home. He also reported in the final interview that he would maybe speak to the SAS teacher or teacher aide if he needed support or advice. Student 5 had no specific friends and belonged to no groups.

Emotional well-being

Student 5 said things were just ok at home “not great, not great” in interview 3. He watched TV, played his computer and slept in his spare time, reporting he was good at sleeping, watching TV and playing the computer in all three interviews. Student 5 also mentioned being good at science in interviews 1 and 2, although he was disappointed they did not do any science in the SAS class. In interview 3 another strength was maths, because he had been having some success in class in this subject. Student 5 valued his mum in 1, but only mentioned sleeping and going home in interview 2. In interview 3 “my computer and TV... that’s it!” were the things that were important to him. Even when prompted, no people were valued. In interview 1 student 5 responded to the question about having a bad day with the answer of ringing his mum. In interviews 2 and 3 he said he wouldn’t go to school. Student 5 would like to work in a fast food restaurant in 1, because he loved food. In interview 2, he decided being a train driver was a more suitable vocation, because he loved trains and in interview 3 he reverted to working in a fast food establishment.

Other comments

Student 5 liked being in the SAS class in B because “we get free time a lot, more than 10 minutes and it’s easy. It’s junior work she’s giving. It’s so easy.” He also said that the other people in the class were idiots. In interviews 2 and 3 he liked the consistency of one classroom and 2 teachers, not having to walk around a lot. In interview 3, Student 5 was very concerned about returning to the mainstream class because he didn’t like the students there; it appeared they had been unkind to him in the past.

Semi-structured interviews: Student 6

The following is a summary of the interviews with student 6 at the beginning on the 8th June (Interview 1), middle on the 21st August (Interview 2) and at the end 24th October (Interview 3), of the study.

Attachments

Student 6 said she would share a secret with her step mum in all three interviews. Her perspective was that things at home were good. In interviews 1 and 2 she mentioned student 4 from the SAS class as being a friend. In interview 3, she discussed 3 other students from the SAS class as being her friend. Student 6 had weekly meetings with a mediator to discuss sensitive issues of a history of family problems related to her birth mother, which she mentioned in interview 1. She belonged to a support group to assist her emotional development. In interview 3 Student 6 said she could trust the teacher aide if she was having problems at school. In interview 1, student 6 was a member of an athletics group; she belonged to no social groups in interview 2, but had joined the cadets in interview 3, which she had found enjoyable.

Emotional well-being

Student 6 said she was good at facing her fears, having reached the top of a leap of faith during a ropes course she had attended recently. Her other strengths in interview 1 were athletics, sport and spelling. Sport, particularly running was a strength in all three interviews, according to student 6, yet in interview 2 she also mentioned climbing and geometry; a current theme taught in class. Student 6 reported that family and friends were important to her in all three interviews, particularly her step mum and little brother in 1 and her bed in interview 2. If she was having a bad day she admitted she would “probably swear at everyone I saw” in interview 1 and would feel annoyed and frustrated in interviews 2 and 3. Her ambition in interviews 1 and 2 was to be a CSI agent. CSI was currently a popular TV programme. In interview 3, student 6 said she would like to be in the navy, possibly due to her recent interest in the cadets.

Other comments

Student 6 considered she was selected for the SAS programme because she didn’t get along with the teachers. She considered she was learning to control her anger in interview 1 and that going back to mainstream will be hard as they get a lot of breaks in the SAS class. In interview 2, student 6 thought she would find it difficult to return to class because “everyone’s mean to me...they pick on me”. In interview 3 she stated that the programme had helped her to be “more confident about myself and more willing to talk to people about things now and I can talk to people about things now.”

Semi-structured interviews: Student 7

The following is a summary of the interviews with student 7 at the beginning on the 13th June (Interview 1), middle on the 24th August (Interview 2) and at the end 19th October

(Interview 3), of the study. In the final interview Student 7 was extremely tired and affected her ability to communicate effectively.

Attachments

Student 7 lived with her grandparents in interviews 1 and 2 and has a good relationship with them. Towards the end of the study her grandparent's relationship broke down and consequently Student 7 was finding life difficult at home where she continued to live with grandma. Although Student 7 said she would confide in her grandma throughout the study. Student 7 had one particular good friend who she spent time with regularly. She said she trusted some of the teachers whom she named and specifically sought advice from the SAS teacher, teacher aide and the school counsellor. Student 7 was a New Zealand representative in soccer and belonged to a number of teams both at school and in the community.

Emotional well-being

Student 7 believed she was good at sports, soccer, dancing and maths in 1. In interview 2 she said soccer, dancing and singing and in interview 3 sport and energetic stuff. Her values were her family, friends, soccer and sport in all three interviews. If Student 7 was having a bad day she said she would feel depressed and go home in interview 1. In interview 2 she would be sad and angry and in interview 3, angry and grumpy. In interview 1 her chosen career was to enrol on the army course at school. In interview 2 and 3 she wanted to be a cook, maybe in the army, as she was enjoying the cookery course at school. In interview 3 Student 7 also wanted to be a famous soccer player.

Other comments

Student 7 thought that if she wasn't in the SAS programme at the beginning of the programme that she would be bunking school. She also felt that the work was easy and she

missed PE. She thought the SAS programme was having a positive effect on her behaviour. “If I was my old self I’d probably just stand up and knock them over but now I just control my anger and ignore them or tell someone that I need to go to time out” (Interview 1). She felt she had changed: “I don’t go around looking for trouble... like I used to go round causing trouble but I don’t do that anymore. I don’t like fighting; I don’t like any of that anymore” (Interview 2). Student 7 believed the class had “taught me how to control myself. Control others and not get hijacked into other peoples business and make your own decisions.” (Interview 2) She thought she would cope with going back to mainstream because she knew she could come back to the SAS class and talk to the teachers there. In 3 she said “It has helped me. I just need to work more on how I react to things”.

Semi-structured interviews: Student 8

The following is a summary of the interviews with student 8 at the beginning on the 8th June (Interview 1), middle on the 21st August (Interview 2) and at the end 24th October (Interview 3), of the study.

Attachments

Student 8 lived with her aunty in interviews 1 and 2 and appeared to have little connection to her. Student 8 was a member of girls brigade, a church youth group and was a church goer, all of which she disliked. Student 8 moved to alternative care one week before the final interview and was happy with her new caregiver; “She’s pretty cool...it’s fantastic.... I get to do whatever I want” (Interview 3). Student 8 had a few good friends and trusted the teacher aide in interviews 2 and 3.

Emotional well-being

Student 8 thought she was good at sport, particularly rugby and soccer in interview 1. In 2 she said there was nothing she was good at, and in 3 merely spelling. She did think that

it was important to get along with everyone in 1 and valued her family and friends in interviews 2 and 3, including her aunty. Student 8 decided she would be angry if she was having a bad day in 1 and would swear at herself. In interviews 2 and 3 she said she wouldn't care and would come to school. In all three interviews student 8 said she would like to be an English teacher when she left school.

Other comments

Student 8 considered she must have changed since being in the SAS class because "I haven't been to referral for like 7 weeks!" (Interview 2). She thought her behaviour was better and she was doing more work but had reservations about going back to mainstream as "I'll get teased from my other class" (Interview 2). In 3 Student 8 said she was getting along with more people although it would be hard to get along with the other students in her old class when she is reintegrated.

Semi-structured interviews: Student 9

The following is a summary of the interviews with student 9 at the beginning on the 19th June (Interview 1), middle on the 21st August (Interview 2) and at the end 19th November (Interview 3), of the study.

Attachments

Student 9 made positive reference to his mother in all three interviews, which suggests he was attached to her. He also mentioned other family members in each interview and in interview 3 said things were good at home. Student 9 spent time with his peers daily and enjoyed playing a variety of sports with them. He belonged to an active youth group and was a regular church goer. In interview 1 student 8 said he trusts the teachers at school, specifically the teacher aide in interviews 2 and 3.

Emotional well-being

Student 9 believed he was good at playing sport, art and history in interview 1. In interview 2 he also mentioned cooking, eating, talking and not doing any work. In interview 3 he only said rugby and work, when he put his mind to it. In interviews 2 and 3, Student 9 said he valued his family and his education. He admits he would be angry if he was having a bad day in interview 1 and 2. In interview 1 he would blame himself and his mum and in interview 3 he would feel alright and go home. In interview 1, student 9 did say he would punch someone who was annoying him. He appears to be optimistic in life in all three interviews, aspiring to be a chef.

Other comments

Student 9 believed the programme had improved his attitude towards people in interview 1 and was enjoying the smaller class. Interview 2 he suggests his behaviour in class has improved. The final interview prompted Student 9 to say he had been involved in fewer fights since being in the SAS class and he was enjoying using the computers.